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SELECT PASSAGES  
ILLUSTRATING NEOPLATONISM





# SELECT PASSAGES ILLUSTRATING NEOPLATONISM

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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LONDON

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING  
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

NEW YORK AND TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN CO.

1923

**MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.**  
**RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,**  
**PRINTERS, BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.**

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	7
I. PRINCIPLES OF METAPHYSIC . . . . .	24
II. THE GENERAL SOUL . . . . .	31
III. THE DIVINE INTELLIGENCE . . . . .	40
IV. THE ONE . . . . .	51
V. MATTER . . . . .	65
VI. THE HUMAN SOUL . . . . .	74
VII. GOOD AND EVIL . . . . .	93
VIII. BEAUTY . . . . .	104
IX. SOME RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF NEOPLATONISM	114

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THIS volume is the first of a series dealing with non-Jewish religious systems contemporary with the early days of Christianity. By the courtesy of Drs. Oesterley and Box it is allowed to be appended to their Series "Translations of Early Documents."

# SELECT PASSAGES ILLUSTRATING NEOPLATONISM

## INTRODUCTION

i. THE school known as Neoplatonic, in distinction from the "orthodox" Platonism of the later Academy, originated in the third century after Christ, and lasted until the public teaching of pagan philosophy was forbidden by Justinian in 529. Its external history can be told very shortly. The system which it taught seems to have been, quâ system, the creation of a single mind, though almost all its elements existed in dispersion in the work of earlier thinkers. Plotinus, as we learn from the admirable biography written by his pupil Porphyry, was born A.D. 204 or 205;<sup>1</sup> studied for many years at Alexandria, the last eleven under Ammonius Saccas;<sup>2</sup> joined the ill-fated expedition of the Emperor Gordian against Persia, from a desire to acquaint himself with Eastern thought; and finally, at the age of forty, established himself as a teacher of philosophy at Rome, where he remained until his death in 270. He is represented as a man of great personal charm and saintliness, an unwearied seeker of truth, an inspiring lecturer and spiritual director, an ascetic who was also a humanist and a humani-

<sup>1</sup> His nationality remains uncertain. Some late authorities make him an Egyptian by birth; but his name is Roman. In any case, it can hardly be doubted that Greek was his native tongue.

<sup>2</sup> Ammonius began life as a porter; whence his nickname. He is described as a self-taught mystic, a sort of Jacob Boehme, and is credited with a determining influence on the thought of Plotinus; but very little is known of his instruction, which was purely oral. His dim figure stands in somewhat the same relation to Neoplatonism as that of Socrates to Platonism.

tarian.<sup>1</sup> He published no written work before he was fifty. His collected essays, edited after his death by Porphyry, form the six books known as the *Enneads* (sets of nine).

The teaching of Plotinus was continued at Rome by Porphyry and Iamblichus. The last-named retired in later life to his native country of Syria, where he died c. 330; and the school at Rome seems to have dispersed about this time, to reappear in various centres in the East. Neoplatonism now rapidly became the accepted creed of the cultured minority who were struggling to save the remnant of the Hellenic tradition. For a brief space, when philosophy had captured the Purple in the person of Julian, they had the illusion of success. But Julian's reaction came too late, and henceforth paganism is on the defensive. In 415 the amiable and brilliant Hypatia, head of the Neoplatonic school at Alexandria, was murdered by Christian monks. By this time, however, the disciples of Plotinus had succeeded in winning from the orthodox Academy the coveted chair of Plato at Athens; and it was in Plato's city that Greek thought made its last stand against the Church which it envisaged as "a fabulous and formless darkness mastering the loveliness of the world."<sup>2</sup> This final period was inaugurated by Plutarch (the second), and had its highest achievement in the encyclopædic activity of Proclus, the Aristotle of Neoplatonism (410-485). The story ends with the tragi-comic journey of Damascius, the last of the Platonic "successors," and his brother philosophers, in search of a wise kingdom in the East where Christianity could not reach them.

ii. The last two generations have seen a marked revival of interest in the speculative thought of later antiquity. As a consequence, the opinion of the learned world on the historical development and significance of Neoplatonism has undergone

<sup>1</sup> In addition to his philosophical seminars he kept a school for orphan children. He also wished at one time to found in Campania a "Platonopolis" or philosophic community.

<sup>2</sup> Eunapius, *Vita Maximi*.

drastic revision. During the eighteenth, and a great part of the nineteenth century it was customary, particularly among English critics, to assume that the genuine movement of the Greek spirit came to an end with Plutarch of Chaeronea or with Marcus Aurelius, if not with Aristotle. Neoplatonism was commonly regarded as a negligible theosophy, a syncretism of the more extravagant elements in Plato's teaching with ideas borrowed from Egyptian, Jewish, Christian and other Oriental sources. This prejudice affected to some extent the earliest historians of the school, Matter (1817), Simon (1845), and Vacherot (1846). But Chaignet, Bigg, Caird, Whittaker, Inge, and almost all recent writers are agreed in finding the Plotinian system Hellenic through and through, and presenting it not as the decadence of Greek thought but as its logical culmination. The change is mainly due to more intelligent study of the texts; but it has doubtless been aided by a change in the temper of the age. We are less disposed than were our grandfathers to confuse mysticism with mystification; and perhaps at the same time less ready to turn away in disgust from a religion which dispensed with ritual, a morality which ignored politics, and a philosophy which omitted the idea of progress.

The claim of the Neoplatonists to be the spiritual legatees of Plato, "the most divine philosopher," "the Master," is in the main substantiated. Better on the whole than any other writers, ancient or modern, they realise and reproduce, in their best work, the singular blend of humanism and asceticism, poetry and logic, the critical and the devotional spirit, which constitutes the Platonic temperament. Their conscious aim was to expound, or at the most to expand, not to criticise or correct the doctrine of the founder.<sup>1</sup> It has been justly observed

<sup>1</sup> There are a few passages where Plotinus seems to be correcting Plato; but he never *admits* doing so. Later Neoplatonists treated the writings of Plato almost as an inspired Scripture—a sign that philosophy was already passing, despite itself, into the shadow of the Middle Age—although they continued to allow themselves considerable laxity in interpretation. We



that nothing would have pleased Plotinus better than Augustine's description of him as "Plato come to life again." Yet Plotinus was in truth much more than the reviver and expositor of another man's thought: he was himself a thinker of first-rate speculative ability. One recent critic calls him "the greatest individual thinker between Aristotle and Descartes"; another regards him as the greatest metaphysician of antiquity.

His originality showed itself, not in the discovery of a new philosophical method, or in the affirmation of a new attitude towards life, but in the constructive power which, starting from certain scattered hints in Plato, the most unsystematic of creators, and certain loose ends in Aristotle, the most inconclusive of systematisers, and utilising whatever seemed valuable in Stoicism and the later Academy, evolved a scheme of Reality at once more comprehensive and more closely knit than anything which had yet been attempted; a scheme which was to hold together for the next three hundred years all that was best worth saving among the results of seven centuries of free speculation; a scheme, finally, in which the religion of Platonism attained its mature expression in response to the demands of the new religious consciousness. The aim of his system is two-fold: first, to furnish a rational account of the Reality implied in experience; secondly, to place the individual in direct contact with this Reality.

iii. The instrument with which he attacks the former problem is simply the dialectic of Plato. In Plato's hands, dialectic had shown that all change involves an underlying permanence, all difference an underlying unity. Hence arose the distinction between two worlds, a variable world of sensible objects or of Becoming, and a constant world of Forms or of Being. The first is an imperfect image of the second, reflected by it upon Matter; the second exists in its own right. The distinction is

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may compare the attitude of the Pythagorean school towards their "Master" [αὐτός, lit. "Himself"].

not spatial or temporal, but is based on a difference of values and a one-sided causal relation. To it there corresponds in the knower the distinction between sense-experience and reason. Soul, both in the universe and in the individual, is the principle which mediates between the two worlds. Thus, far Plato carried the analysis. He raised, without finally determining them, important questions about the relation of the Forms to one another, to the mind which knows them, and to God.

The next stage of regress was reached in Aristotle's doctrine of the identity of knower and known, the unity of the intuitive Intellect and intelligible Form in the divine self-consciousness—a view already suggested, but not worked out, in the later writings of Plato. In such a transparent unity of self-consciousness dialectic seemed to have attained its goal and its repose. But this repose offered scanty consolation to the religious instinct. For Aristotle the individual, qua individual, remains imprisoned in the world of sense: the summit of his being is indeed an imperishable intellect, but his human individuality can only be realised in and through the body of which it is the "entelechy." With the post-Aristotelian school, Stoic, Epicurean, and Sceptic alike, the fundamental problem is the salvation of the individual; and all alike, abandoning the metaphysical for the ethical path, seek a solution within the individual himself. Breaking away the subjective moment from the objective, the self from the world, they endeavour to secure the soul against the flux of circumstance by isolating it from experience: the Good becomes an attitude of mind. This ethical inwardness was associated, no less by the Stoics than by the Epicureans, with a somewhat crude materialism which did duty for metaphysics, though at times the former school rises to a more spiritual conception of the universe as a "City of God," permeated by a single divine life.

Later Platonism assimilated the Stoic ethic and the Stoic

doctrine of divine penetration, but reacted from the Stoic materialism. It picked up the dialectic process where Aristotle had laid it down, and carried it to its logical completion. In Aristotle's unity of the divine self-consciousness there lurked an unresolved dualism: Thought and Reality, though seen to be inseparable, were still distinguishable moments in God's nature. The last step of the regress remained to be taken: behind this two-in-one dialectic must posit a still purer unity in which the last trace of diversity is taken up and resolved. This ultimate One is the Neoplatonic Absolute.<sup>1</sup>

Such in outline is the course of thought which led to the formulation of the Plotinian doctrine of a "Trinity": viz. the One or the Good, which is "God" *par excellence*; the Divine Intelligence which is "the second God" and contains the Forms; and the General Soul which is "the third God" and the immediate creator of the sensible world. This triad differs fundamentally from the Christian, in that it is a "Trinity of subordination," and that the "Substances" (Hypostases) which compose it are in no sense "Persons." That it was borrowed from or even influenced by Christian theology is highly improbable. It is the outcome of a rationalist analysis, initiated by Plato, developed by Aristotle, and carried further by various thinkers, among whom it is difficult to apportion the credit, in the period between Aristotle and Plotinus.

iv. Some of its critics have described it as a trinity of

<sup>1</sup> That the Form of the Good is beyond Being is already asserted in a famous passage of the *Republic* (509 B). Combining this with the "Demiurge" and the world-Soul of the *Timæus*, Porphyry (*Hist. Phil.*, fr. 16) can discover the triad of divine Hypostases in Plato. But the elaboration of the distinction between the Demiurge, identified with the Intellect, and the Supreme Unity is due to later Platonists. The distinction appears both in Philo (c. 30 B.C.-40 A.D.) and in Numenius of Apamea (c. 160-180 A.D.). The writings of the former were probably unknown to Plotinus, though they contain important anticipations of the Plotinian theory, pointing to a common source which remains unidentified. Nor does it seem that Numenius was in the direct line of descent between Plato and Plotinus, though we know that his works were read in Plotinus' classroom, and that Plotinus was accused at first of plagiarising from him.

abstractions. That the upward movement of dialectic is, taken by itself, a method of abstraction can hardly, I think, be denied. It approaches the Divine by the *via remotionis*, "removing," as Plotinus says, "all attributes until only God is left." The Absolute which is the ultimate term of the regress is *for dialectic* unknowable, since it is beyond thought; unreal, since it is beyond reality; and in general insusceptible of any predicate, since *omnis determinatio est negatio*. Two questions naturally arise: (1) What satisfaction can such a negative theology furnish to the religious, moral and æsthetic consciousness? Is it not simply agnosticism in disguise? (2) How can it account for the existence of a world limited in time and space, a world of change and faultiness in which evil, ugliness and falsehood seem to be no less real factors than goodness, beauty and truth? Must it not, under pain of denying all validity to experience, limit its Absolute either in power, by positing some independent causative principle, or in goodness, by tracing to it the roots of imperfection? Plotinus was familiar with both these difficulties, which must in some form beset all philosophies of transcendence; and he was the last man to underrate their importance. Again and again he comes back to them in his essays. The main interest of his thought lies precisely in the metaphysical subtlety whereby he attempts to preserve a *via media* between pessimistic agnosticism and pessimistic dualism, into one or other of which sloughs most of his contemporaries had fallen.

The answer which Plotinus returns to the first of the two objections referred to above is the answer of the mystic. This does not mean that he was an Orientalising charlatan, as the nineteenth century tended to think; nor that he was an anti-intellectualist, as some twentieth-century writers would like to believe. Like Spinoza and Mr. F. H. Bradley, he was a mystic without ceasing to be a rationalist; and in Plato<sup>1</sup> he

Perhaps one should say, rather, in Socrates.

found the supreme example of this rare but by no means self-contradictory temperament. The Platonic dialogues, which contained the germ of agnosticism, contained also its antidote or complement. Side by side with the ascent by reason Plotinus found, in such pieces as the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, the adumbration of an ascent by love; not merely a movement from the concrete of sense to the abstract of thought, but a movement from emotional poverty to emotional fulness, from the imperfect realisation of an outer self in time to the perfect realisation of an inner self in God. This teaching was in agreement with his own deepest psychological experience.<sup>1</sup>

For Plotinus, as for Plato, the two movements, the logical and the emotional, are closely linked; are in fact seen at every stage, and most clearly when completed, as two aspects, negative and positive, of a single progress. This union of reason with feeling seems to be the differentia of the Platonic type of mysticism. The Absolute, which is in one sense beyond Being, is in another sense omnipresent: "God has his centre everywhere, his circumference nowhere." Its simplicity is not emptiness but plenitude. Admitting no predicates, it is nevertheless, as in the logic of Mr. Bradley, the ultimate subject of all judgments. Unknowable, it is the crown of knowledge and the supreme object of experience, communicating itself to the individual soul in ecstasy "by a presence

<sup>1</sup> That Plotinus was a practising mystic could be inferred with certainty from his writings, even if we had not Porphyry's express statement that, four times in his life he attained the last summit of contemplation, the consciousness of union with the Absolute. He is not the originator of the doctrine of ecstasy, which is already prominent in Philo and Numenius. But no other Greek writer, perhaps no other writer of any period, has brought to the attempt to describe this remarkable psychical condition so much introspective ability as Plotinus, or to the interpretation of it so sane an imagination. It is probably a mistake, as Whittaker remarks, to seek the genesis of his system in any personal experience: Plotinus is quite clear that union with God, not being properly a mode of cognition, cannot be made the basis of any inference.

higher than all knowing." The divine triad is within man as well as outside him; man's centre and God's centre are identical, and the individual finds salvation by an ascent which is no barren process of abstraction but a conversion or reversion to God and at the same time an inversion upon his own deepest self. The earlier Greek thinking had tended to ignore the importance of individuality, a tendency which culminated with Aristotle; the later schools had aimed at making the individual self-sufficient. For Plotinus, the opposition of individual and universal is a false opposition due to the limiting and polarising influence of Matter; taken at his centre, the individual is the universal, and it is precisely when his empirical self is discarded that his true individuality is most fully affirmed.

Neoplatonism thus became a religion in the sense that it attempted to provide a channel of communication between the human and the Divine. It was never a religion in the sense of claiming to be the bearer of a unique revelation. It had neither sacraments<sup>1</sup> nor sacred books, neither a church nor a priesthood. Its professors indeed tried to find a place for the popular Hellenic orthodoxy, which seemed inextricably bound up with Hellenic culture. Following Plato, they endeavoured by ingenuities of allegory to discover their speculative conceptions in the myths of Homer and Hesiod. Philo and Clement had applied the same method to the book of Genesis. But Plotinus sets small store by it (cf. *Enn.* IV. iii. 14; •III. v. 9); and to the end the alliance between philosophy and dogma remains artificial and external. Insistence on the magical value of outward ritual is confined to the degenerate phase of Neoplatonism (represented for us by the anonymous treatise *de Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*) which

Picavet's hypothesis that the mysteries, especially those of Eleusis, served as the organ of its religious teaching and formed the basis of its influence cannot be regarded as proved.

followed its dissemination in the East and was almost certainly due to intermixture with non-Hellenic elements. Miracles were ascribed to Plotinus, to Iamblichus and to Proclus, as to other religious founders, by the enthusiasm of their followers; but the miraculous has no rôle in their philosophy. Their highest God is superessential and superintelligible, but never supernatural; the conception of Law is dominant throughout.

v. If Plotinus avoids agnosticism, can he also avoid dualism? The particular soul may revert to her source; but why did she ever leave it? And more generally, why, since the world is not necessary to God, should any world exist? Does not the dialectic at each stage of the ascent kick down the ladder by which it has climbed, thereby rendering the *downward* process unintelligible? The main difficulty for Neoplatonism, as for any philosophy which affirms a transcendent Absolute, is to prevent the Absolute and the world from falling asunder so that either the former becomes relative or the latter becomes unreal. The Neoplatonists tried to escape between the horns of the dilemma by means of a doctrine of emanation, based on a peculiar theory of causality.<sup>1</sup> True causality for Plotinus and Proclus is a *timeless* relation of dependence between Beings; "creation" is only a metaphor to express this dependence. It is, moreover, a *one-sided* relation: that is, the higher determines the lower without being determined by its own causative activity; it gives itself to the lower, yet itself remains undiminished and unaffected. Thirdly, there is nothing in the effect which does not exist *eminenter* in the cause; but the cause is never perfectly mirrored in the effect.

<sup>1</sup> Like the other essential elements in Neoplatonism, this theory may be said to have been implicit in Platonism from the beginning. It first appears explicitly in Philo. For the metaphysic of Plotinus it is fundamental, and Proclus rightly gives it great prominence in his exposition of Neoplatonic principles. Failure to recognise its importance has led Caird and others into serious misconceptions of the system as a whole.

Finally, by identifying itself with its cause the effect is redeemed from its necessary imperfection. Apply these principles to the relation between the Absolute and the world, and it becomes possible to say that the world is eternal, yet caused by God ; that it needs God, though God does not need it ; that it is in God, though God is not in it ; and that it redeems itself in so far as it returns upon God. This peculiar relationship is sometimes expressed by saying that the Absolute is immanent by its power, though transcendent by its "essence." The world is not unreal, for it is the gift of the Absolute ; the Absolute is not relative, for it is not impoverished by giving.

The doctrine of one-sided causal relations is rejected as impossible and meaningless by many modern philosophers, though it has lately been revived by thinkers as widely different in other respects as Mr. Bertrand Russell and Prof. A. E. Taylor. Certainly without some such saving assumption no theory of transcendence can, in the present writer's judgment, escape being broken in two. And even with it serious difficulties remain. It tells us, at best, *how* the imperfect exists in relation to the Perfect, but not *why* it exists ; and it does not account for the element of positive Evil in the world. To answer these latter questions without compromising the transcendence of the Absolute taxed to the utmost the ingenuity of Plotinus and his successors. That they attached great importance to the problem of the "descent of the souls" and the kindred topic of "the necessity of Evil," is evident from the pains they bestow on them ; and it is no less evident from the variety and tentative character of the suggestions they put forward that they never felt themselves to have reached any final solution.

Within the spiritual world they cannot admit Evil : they will have no compromise with the idea of an evil world-Soul, familiar to them in the teaching of the Gnostics and of some



earlier Platonists.<sup>1</sup> Hence they commonly fall back on the affirmation of a tendency in the perfect to reproduce, mirror or explicate itself.<sup>2</sup> The working of this tendency at each successive level of Reality gives rise, first to the Intelligence, then to the various grades of Soul, and finally to Matter. "For Plotinus, the history of the world is the history of the involution of a spiritual force into Matter."<sup>3</sup> Each successive effect is necessarily inferior to its cause; but at the higher levels this inferiority is eternally redeemed by the self-identification of effect with cause, so that such relative imperfection does not involve evil. Bare Matter is, however, incapable of this self-redemption through self-transcendence; and the individual soul, though capable of it, does not at all times achieve it. Hence Plotinus equates Evil sometimes with Matter, sometimes with the instinct of self-assertion which divides the particular soul from other souls and from God. The two views can be combined, since Matter is for the Platonist the principle of division; but the first mode of expression stresses more strongly the *privative* character of Evil. The Plotinian Matter is the limiting point of the procession from the Absolute, the ideal boundary-line of existence; it is complete Evil simply because it is complete privation of Reality or Unity.

Inge has pointed out that this celebrated equation—which,

<sup>1</sup> Notably Plutarch, whose view is based on a questionable interpretation of *Laws* 896 E. The possibility of a devil is explicitly rejected by Plato in the *Politicus*, 270 A.

<sup>2</sup> Certain of the passages where Plotinus formulates this principle suggest that he does after all regard the world as the self-expression of the Absolute (and therefore necessary to it). Cf. extracts iv and vi. The higher Reality creates not by design, but because to create is a necessary consequence of its perfection (*Enn.* III. ii. 2).

<sup>3</sup> Prof. J. A. Stewart. The higher stages of this process are timeless. In its lower stages, which are temporal, it *appears* as an *evolution from Matter* (a point clearly brought out by Proclus). But to accept "Evolution" as a final explanation of anything would have been to drop the whole Neoplatonic theory of causality: cf. extract xi.

though based on hints in Plato,<sup>1</sup> has been generally recognised as one of the most striking and original features of Plotinism—rests on the assumption of an exact correspondence between degrees of reality and degrees of value. The difficulty of such an assumption is that on the existence-scale the lowest point is obviously zero; whereas on the value-scale we seem to have experience of *minus* quantities, pain, ugliness, moral evil, etc. If we are to accommodate the two we must (1) subordinate ethical dualism to metaphysical monism, by denying negative values; or (2) subordinate metaphysical monism to ethical dualism, by affirming negative existences; or else (3) reduce both good and evil to a relativity taken up and transcended in the Absolute. The first is the Plotinian solution; the second, the Manichean; the third, the Spinozist-Hegelian. The third course was barred for Plotinus by the Platonic teaching that the Absolute is the Good and cannot be the cause of things evil; the second ran counter to the general direction of Greek philosophic thought, which, with occasional and temporary hesitations, was a movement towards an ever purer monism. Yet Plotinus was not unaware of the weaknesses of his own view; and there are places in his writings where he seems for a moment to be pressed back into Manicheism or forward into Hegelianism. It was doubtless just the apparent dualism of such passages as *Enn.* I. viii. 14 (xxxvi in this selection) that frightened Proclus into dropping the identification of Evil with Matter, which seemed too much like hypostatizing the Devil. But Proclus' own solution does not differ widely in principle from that of Plotinus. The point on which he chiefly insists is that individual things appear evil only when considered in abstraction from the world-process; Evil as such has no place in Reality.\*

\* vi. The Plotinian system presents many secondary aspects of

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle (*Metaph.* 988a 14) definitely ascribes this view to Plato.

interest<sup>1</sup> which cannot be dealt with in a brief introduction, or fully illustrated within the compass of a small volume of extracts. Still less can adequate justice be done to the work of Plotinus' successors. Several of these were men of great ability; but the intellectual temper of the last three centuries of paganism was more conservative than creative, and the best minds devoted themselves for the most part to securing positions already affirmed. None of the later Neoplatonists introduced into the doctrine structural modifications of first-rate importance, though they were constantly elaborating it in detail and retouching it at those points which were most open to attack.<sup>2</sup> The delicate balance of the system as Plotinus had left it was not always maintained. In the fourth century the school seems to have been in danger of lapsing into ritualism and occultism; in the fifth it began to lose itself in the dry places of scholasticism.

From the literary standpoint the most attractive of the post-Plotinian writers is Porphyry, a charming moralist, a good stylist and a man of wide culture. His accurate grasp of his master's system is shown in the *Sententiae* or *Gateway to the Spiritual World*, a very clear summary of the main points in Plotinus' teaching. The individual quality of his mind perhaps comes out most plainly in the *ad Marcellum*, a little manual of devotion composed for the use of his wife. But for the philosophical student by far the most interesting work, after the *Enneads*, is Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, a concise exposition

<sup>1</sup> In particular, attention may be called to the analysis of the ideas of time and eternity; the theory of freedom; the place assigned to art; and several important advances in psychology, notably in regard to the conception of consciousness and its relation to thought.

<sup>2</sup> The most noteworthy developments, besides the refusal to identify Matter with Evil, are the abandonment of the view that a part of every human soul remains unfallen (a theory which tended to break the individual in two); the denial that human souls can be literally incarnated in brutes; the rejection of the Plotinian Categories in favour of the Aristotelian; the elaboration of the divine hierarchy by introducing subordinate triads; and the doctrine of the Henads (see xxiv), which seems to have been the invention of Iamblichus (Proclus in *Timaeum*, p. 94).

of the logical and metaphysical framework of Neoplatonism, arranged, like Spinoza's *Ethics*, in a connected series of formal propositions. It sets forth with great precision and subtlety the presuppositions of the Plotinian system and the interconnection of the different parts, with certain original additions. It is also one of the most important sources of medieval speculation. On the grounds alike of its intrinsic value and of its historical position it is much to be regretted that the attention of modern writers has generally been diverted from it by a repellent style and the unsatisfactory state of the text. Of the other surviving works of Proclus, those which best repay study are the three short treatises on theodicy (*de Decem Dubitationibus circa Providentiam*; *de Providentia et Fato*; *de Malorum Subsistentia*), preserved only in a medieval Latin translation. We have also, besides the hymns and some scientific writings, a number of commentaries on Plato, of varying interest, and the little-known *Platonic Theology*.

vii. A word must be added about the relations between Neoplatonism and Christianity. Porphyry records that Ammonius, the master of Plotinus, was a Christian before he became a philosopher; and we know that Origen, the ablest of the Christian Platonists of Alexandria, was one of Ammonius' pupils. Plotinus, therefore, can hardly have failed to come into contact with Christianity; but he nowhere mentions it by name, and there is no sufficient evidence that he was acquainted either with the Septuagint or with any Christian literature.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, he devotes a long and brilliant essay to refuting the doctrines of the half-Christian Gnostics. There is nothing surprising in this: Gnosticism doubtless appeared to him as a perversion of Platonism, Catholicism merely as an

<sup>1</sup> Critics have discovered in the *Enneads* a certain number of parallelisms with the Christian sacred books; but none of these seem beyond the reach of coincidence. Some of the resemblances to the New Testament are perhaps to be explained by the hypothesis of a common source in earlier Greek thought.

*exitiabilis superstitio* devoid of any philosophical pretensions.<sup>1</sup> But in the next generation Porphyry directly attacked Christianity from the Platonist standpoint, as Celsus had done earlier and as Julian did afterwards.<sup>2</sup> The work of Porphyry has unfortunately perished like the others, having been sought out and burned by the Christians in 431. Besides philosophical arguments he seems to have used the novel weapon of historical criticism. We are told that he challenged the traditional ascription of the Book of Daniel; and there is some reason to think that he assailed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He is said to have been familiar with the original Hebrew texts. Julian instituted an elaborate comparison between the Mosaic and the Platonic theodicy, tending to show the moral and philosophic inferiority of the former, and leading up to the position that God does not express his will through any unique revelation or any single man or society, but through the whole order of the visible universe and the whole of human culture.<sup>3</sup> The fundamental barrier between Neoplatonism and Catholicism was, as Augustine points out in an illuminating passage,<sup>4</sup> the doctrine of the Incarnation, which the Hellenic mind to the last found insupportable.

The question of the influence exerted by Neoplatonism on Christian theology and philosophy, and through these on the thought of the modern world, is too large to be discussed here. The importance of this influence has recently been vindicated by M. Picavet and other members of the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* at Paris, and is increasingly recognised by writers on the subject.<sup>5</sup> Three main channels of tradition may be dis-

<sup>1</sup> For Neoplatonism the theological virtues are faith, hope, charity and truth (Porph. *ad Marc.* 24).

<sup>2</sup> After Julian the opposition continued; but very guarded expression was usually necessary owing to the danger of persecution.

<sup>3</sup> See G. J. Neumann's reconstruction, *Juliani Imperatoris Librorum contra Christianos quae supersunt.*

<sup>4</sup> *Confessions* vii. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Thus Eucken says that Plotinus has influenced Christian theology more than any other thinker; and Inge, that Christian theology is just Platonism applied to the interpretation of the beliefs of the first Christians.

tinguished: from Ammonius Saccas through Origen; from Plotinus through Augustine;<sup>1</sup> and from Proclus through the pseudo-Aristotelian *de Causis* and the writings falsely ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite. By these and other avenues Neoplatonism entered into and formed the thought of the Byzantine theologians and of such Western thinkers as John the Scot and Anselm. At the same time, through the *de Causis* and the so-called *Theologia Aristotelis* (really a cento of passages from Plotinus), it profoundly affected the Arabian and Jewish philosophers of the Middle Age; mediated by Averroism, a fresh stream of Neoplatonic influence reaches down to the later scholastics and beyond them to Malebranche; mediated by Ibn Gebirol and Maimonides, it is carried over to Spinoza. Finally, Neoplatonism was kept alive in the Byzantine Empire by Psellus and his successors, and by them handed on to Pletho and Bessarion, and so to Pic della Mirandola and the other humanists of the Renaissance.

The translations which follow are made from my own text (in the press, for publication in the Texts for Students Series), which will be seen to be somewhat more conservative than Volkmann's text of the *Enneads*. Where original conjectures affecting the sense are adopted they are indicated in footnotes. In the passages from the first three *Enneads* I have had the advantage of comparing my rendering with the complete version by Mr. Stephen MacKenna which is in process of being published by the Medici Society; and I have availed myself of Mr. MacKenna's permission to borrow here and there a happy turn of phrase. I am also indebted to my colleague Professor W. G. de Burgh for several suggestions and much kind encouragement.

S. R. DODDS.

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<sup>1</sup> Whole passages of Plotinus are reproduced almost word for word by Augustine (who read the *Enneads* in a Latin translation). Compare e.g. August. *de immort. anim.* 8 with *Enn.* IV. vii. 3 (xxxi): *Conf.* ix. 10 with *Enn.* V. i. 2(v).

I  
PRINCIPLES OF METAPHYSIC

I. OF CAUSATION

*Proclus, Inst. Theol., 7, 11, 27*

7. EVERY productive cause is superior to that which it produces. For if not superior, it must be either inferior or equal.

Let us suppose it equal. Now, either the product has itself power to produce a further product, or it is altogether sterile. But if it be sterile, it is thereby shown inferior to its producer: the impotent is not equal to the fecund in which is the power of creation. And if it be productive, the further product will again be either equal to its cause or unequal. But if it be equal, and if this be true universally, that the producer generates a consequent equal to itself, then all Beings will be equal one to another, and no one better than another. And if it be not equal, neither was the former product equal to the former producer. For equal powers create equals; but if a cause, not being equal to its consequent, were yet equal to its own prior, we should have here equal powers creating unequals. Therefore it is impossible the product should be equal to the producer.

Again, it is impossible the producer should ever be inferior. For as it gives to the product an existence, it must furnish also the power proper for that existence. But if it is itself productive of all the power which is in its consequent, it is able to create a like character in itself, that is, to increase its own

power.<sup>1</sup> The means to this cannot be lacking, since it has force sufficient to create; nor can the will be lacking, since by nature all things have appetite of their good. Therefore, were it able to fashion another thing more perfect than itself, it would make itself <sup>2</sup> perfect before its consequent.

• Since, then, the product is neither equal to the producer nor superior to it, the producer is in all cases superior to the product.

11. All Beings proceed from a single First Cause.

For otherwise no being has a cause; or else the sum of Being is limited and there is a circuit of causation within the sum; or else there will be regress to infinity, cause lying behind cause, so that the positing of prior causes will never find its term.

But if no Being has a cause, there will be no sequence of primary and secondary, perfecting and perfected, regulative and regulated, generative and generated, active and passive; and all Being will be unknowable. For the business of scientific knowledge is the recognition of causes, and only when we recognise the causes of Beings do we say that we *know*.<sup>3</sup>

And if causes transmit themselves in a circuit, the same things will be at once prior and consequent; that is, since every productive cause is superior to its product, each will be at once more efficient than the rest and less efficient. (It is indifferent whether we make the connection of cause and effect and derive the one from the other through a greater • or a less number of intermediate causes; for the cause of all those intermediaries will be superior to all of them, and

<sup>1</sup> On the assumption that the consequent is superior. Cf. Descartes' third proof of the existence of God, in the *Reply to the Second Objections*: "God, having the power of conserving me, should have, *a fortiori*, the power of conferring these perfections on himself."

<sup>2</sup> *favré*.

<sup>3</sup> This is the Aristotelian definition of knowledge: cf. *Anal. Post.* i. 2 init., etc.



the greater their number, the greater the efficiency of that cause.)

And if the positing of causes may be continued to infinity, cause behind cause for ever, thus again all things will be unknowable. For nothing infinite can be an object of understanding; and the causes being unknown, there can be no knowledge of their consequents.

Since, then, Beings must have a cause, and cause is not convertible with effect, and there cannot be regress to infinity, it remains that there is a First Cause whence the several Beings proceed as branches from a root, some near to it and others more remote. That there is not more than one such source, is established by the proposition <sup>1</sup> that the subsistence of any multiplicity is secondary to Unity.

27. All productive causes are rendered productive by their perfection and superfluity of power.

For if the productiveness of any cause arose not from its perfection but from a defect of power, it could not continue to preserve without declension its own place in the causal series. That which through defect and weakness affords existence to some other thing, makes that other actual at the price of its own conversion and transmutation. But every true productive cause rests unaltered while its consequent proceeds from it. Subsisting in fulness and perfection, it brings to actuality the order of Being subordinate to it; and this without movement, without loss, but keeping its own essence, neither transmuted into its consequents nor suffering any diminution.

For the product does not arise by diremption of the producer: diremption is not the means even of temporal generation and generative causes, far less of true causation.<sup>2</sup> Neither is the product a transformation of the producer: the

<sup>1</sup> *Inst. Theol.* 5; cf. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> True causation is simply the timeless relation of dependence connecting the various grades of Reality; cf. *Introd.* p. 16.

productive cause is not the Matter of its consequent, but retains its own character, distinct from the product.

Thus the engenderer is established beyond all alteration or diminution, multiplying itself in virtue of its generative power, furnishing out of its own Being an order of secondary substances.

## II. OF REVERSION

*Proclus, Inst. Theol., 31, 33.*

31. All things revert in respect of their Being<sup>1</sup> to that Principle whence they proceed. For if anything should go forth, yet not revert to the cause of its outgoing, it must be without appetite of that cause : seeing all that has appetite is turned towards the object of appetite.

But all desire is of Good ; and each thing attains the Good through the agency of its own proximate cause : therefore each has appetite of its own cause. It attains the Good through that which gives it Being ; its first appetite is of that through which it attains the Good ; and its reversion is to that whereof it first has appetite.

33. All that proceeds from any principle and reverts thither, has a circular activity.

For if it reverts to that Principle whence it proceeds, the end is convergent with the beginning, and the movement one and continuous, going forth from the Unmoved and to the Unmoved again returning. Thus all things proceed in a circuit, from their causes to their causes again. There are greater circuits and less, in that some revert to their immediate priors, others to the superior causes, and even to the Beginning of all things. For out of the Beginning all things are, and towards it all revert.

<sup>1</sup> *Z.e.* they tend to identify their Being with that of their cause. Cf. liv and lxvii.

III. THAT BEYOND ALL BODIES IS SOUL; BEYOND ALL SOULS,  
THE INTELLECTIVE PRINCIPLE; BEYOND ALL INTELLECTIVE  
SUBSTANCES, THE ONE

*Proclus, Inst. Theol., 20.*

Every body is moved by something not itself; in its own nature it has no self-movement. Only by communication in Soul is it moved from within: only because of Soul has it life. When Soul is present, the body is in some sense self-moved, but not when Soul is absent showing that Body is naturally moved from without, while self-movement is of Soul's essence. It is of Soul's essence, because she communicates it wherever she is present, and that which she communicates by mere presence must belong to her own Being before it is received by another. She is therefore beyond bodies,<sup>1</sup> as being self-moved in essence, while they by participation come to be self-moved.

Soul, again, being moved by itself, must be ranked below the unmoved Principle whose unmoved existence is its activity. For<sup>2</sup> of all things that are moved, the self-moved has primacy, but of all that cause motion in others, the unmoved: if, therefore, Soul is a cause of motion which is moved by itself, there must exist a prior cause of motion which is unmoved. This unmoved mover is the Intelligence, eternally actualised in an unchanging activity. Only through Intelligence does Soul participate in perpetuity of thought, as Body in<sup>3</sup> self-movement only through Soul: for if perpetuity of thought belonged originally to Soul it would inhere, as self-movement.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* logically prior to Body. The reader must beware of interpreting expressions like "beyond," "higher," "prior," either of spatial separation or of temporal priority. Space and time belong not to Reality but to Appearance; and the world of Appearance is itself without beginning or end in time (*infra*, vi). The proof that Soul is prior to Body comes from Plato, *Laws* 896B. The next paragraph is Aristotelian (cf. *Met.* 1072a 21 ff.); while the doctrine of the One is later development. The whole passage shows what Hierocles meant by his remark that Ammonius Saccas "harmonised" Plato and Aristotle.

<sup>2</sup> *διότι.*

<sup>3</sup> *τοῦ.*

inheres, in all souls. Since then, thought is not originally proper to Soul,<sup>1</sup> we must suppose a prior Principle which is the first thinker. That is, the Intelligence is prior to souls.

Yet again, the One is prior to the Intelligence. For the Intelligence, though unmoved, is yet not Unity: in knowing itself, it is object to its own activity. Moreover, while all things, whatsoever their grade of Reality, participate Unity, not all participate Intelligence:<sup>2</sup> to participate Intelligence is to participate knowledge, since intuitive apprehension is the fount and first cause of all knowing. Thus the One is beyond the Intelligence.

Beyond the One there is no further Principle: for Unity is identical with the Good,<sup>3</sup> and the Good is the source of all things.

#### IV. OF THE NECESSARY OUTGOING OF ALL THINGS FROM THE ONE

*Plotinus Enn., IV. viii. 6.*

It is impossible Unity should be the sole existent: for thus all things would have lain hidden, having no individual shape within the Unity; had the One been stayed in the One, none of the Reals could subsist.

Again, the plurality of these Reals which are generated from the One could not exist without a further outgoing of those powers next in order to them, which have the rank of souls.

In like manner, it was impossible that with souls existence should cease and there should be no emergence of things generated by the souls.

For it is in the nature of every Principle to create that

<sup>1</sup> It is important to remember that for nearly all Greek thought, both popular and philosophic, the distinguishing character of "Soul" (*Psychē*) is *life*, not consciousness.

<sup>2</sup> The higher the place of any Principle in the causal series, the further down the series its influence extends. *Inst. Theol.* 57.

<sup>3</sup> For formal proof of this, see xxi.

immediately subordinate to it, and so unfold itself as from a seed, proceeding from an undivided Source to a goal in the universe of sense. Yet always the prior Principle rests in its own place, while its consequent is engendered—to speak in figures—out of the inexpressible Power which existed in the prior things. It was not fitting that this Power should be stayed by any jealous circumscription;<sup>1</sup> it must expand continually, until the universe should attain the term of its potentiality by the operation of the measureless Power which sends its emissaries to all and cannot suffer that anything should be disinherited. It expanded continually, because there was no force which sought to prevent any the least thing from having portion, in the measure of its capacity, in the Principle of Good. Therefore, if Matter existed from eternity, it was impossible it should exist yet not participate That, which dispenses good to all according to their capacity. And if, on the contrary, the generation of Matter followed as a necessary consequence from prior causes, not even so could it exist in abstraction—as though through impotence that Power had been stayed from reaching it, to whose good grace, as it were, it owed even existence.

Those things, then, which in the sensible universe are fairest, are the outward portrayal of the best things in the intelligible, the outward revealing of their power and goodness; and all are bound together for ever, the sensible with the intelligible, these real in themselves, and those possessed for ever of existence by communication in these, reproducing in the measure of their capacity the intelligible kind.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 29 E.

## II

### THE GENERAL SOUL

#### V. THAT SOUL IS A GREAT AND HONOURABLE THING.

*Plotinus Enn., v. i. 2.*

FIRST, therefore, let every soul bethink herself of this : that she it is who created all things living,<sup>1</sup> breathing into them their principle of life ; all that the land breeds or the sea, all creatures of the air and the divine stars in the heaven, she created ; the sun she created, and this great firmament was made by her ; none other than she apparelled it with order, none other than she revolves it in its appointed courses ; yet is Soul a kind distinct from all that she apparels and moves and makes to live. It is certain she is more honourable than they : for these grow and again perish when Soul, the dispenser of life, departs from them ; but her Being is for ever, because she departs not from herself.

As to the manner of Soul's bestowal of life, whether in the universe or in the several individuals, it is to be conceived after this method. Let the soul of the man meditate on the Great Soul, being herself not small, but in quietness of temper lifted to the height of that meditation, exempt from sense-delusion and all the sorceries that cheat her fellow-souls. Quiet must the imprisoning body be for her, and the wave of the body's passion : let all things likewise be quiet that lie about her. Quiet let the earth be, quiet the sea and the air, and the heaven itself pausing the while.<sup>2</sup> Then into that unmoving

<sup>1</sup> Because each human soul is consubstantial with the General Soul.  
See xl.

<sup>2</sup> ἅμα μένων.

firmament let her conceive Soul flowing in, poured in like a tide from without, from all sides invading it and filling it with light. As the rays of the sun enlightening a dark cloud give it the look of gold and set it all agleam, so did the Soul, entering into the body of the heaven, awaken it from its supineness and give it life and immortality. And thus the heaven, taking from the rational guidance of Soul its everlasting movement, became a blessed living thing. It gained worth when Soul became its guest: before Soul came ~~it~~ was no more than a body without life, no more than earth and water; nay, in strictness, it was but the darkness of Matter, the Unreal, "that which the gods abhor," as a poet has said.<sup>1</sup>

The power and the nature of Soul will become more plainly evident, if one consider here in what manner she embraces the heaven and how she guides it by her acts of will. Through all its mighty bulk she has given herself to the heaven; there is no space great or small but is ensouled. But whereas the several portions of Body are diversely placed, one lying thus and another thus, some being related by way of opposition and others bearing other relations, it is not so with Soul: in her several parts she is not dismembered, neither does she give life parcelwise. All things live with the whole Soul's life, and in every place she is present in entirety. Alike in her unity and in her omnipresence she reflects the Father who engendered her. Manifold and various as is the heaven, by her power it is one: through her is this sensible universe a god. The sun too and the stars are gods because ensouled. Likewise whatever we ourselves are, we are by virtue of the Soul's life: "the dead ones are too nasty for the dunghheap."<sup>2</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad* xx. 65. Matter apart from Soul is unreal because abstract, See xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> *Heraclitus* fr. 85 (Bywater).

## VI. HOW SOUL IS RELATED TO BODY

*Plotinus Enn., II. ix. 2<sup>o</sup>, 3*

•2. . . . That Soul which is not fractional, whereof human kind makes no part, has bestowed upon the universal Body such an emanation of herself as Body is able to contain, but herself dwells abidingly in the Supreme Beauty,<sup>1</sup> and dwells there without deeds: for she does not govern by ratiocination, neither does she consciously redress anything, but by the mere vision of her prior she creates with marvellous power an ordered universe. The harder she is set upon her vision, the fairer she is and the stronger. What she has from thence she transmits to what lies next below: she illuminates eternally, and is eternally illuminated.

3. Because she is eternally illuminated, she transmits to the next order of things her perpetuity of light; and they by that light are for ever embraced and fostered, and enjoy in their own measure the gift of life. It is as though there were some central fire, and all things were warmed from it that had capacity of warmth. But the figure is imperfect. Fire is a thing having limits: but when there exist Powers without limit, and these Powers not isolated from the universe of things,<sup>2</sup> it is impossible they should exist yet not be shared. It is the law that each should transmit his own to another: else the Good will not be good, nor the Intelligence be intelligence, nor the Soul be soul, if below that Being whose life is primal there live not some other, secondary life, persisting while the first persists. It is the law that there should be continuity of all things; and all must be for ever, notwithstanding one order of things is called "generated" because it has dependent existence. . . .

<sup>1</sup> The intelligible universe

<sup>2</sup> Plotinus rejects the doctrine of the Gnostics, who cut off their Heaven-world (Plerōma) from sensible nature by a principle called Iōrōs (the Boundary). Against their dualism he sets up the law of continuity.



## VII. OF THE INTELLECTIVE SOUL

*Plotinus Enn., IV. viii. 3*

. . . The work of the more rational Soul<sup>1</sup> is thought, but not thought alone: else how should Soul be distinct from Intelligence? The Soul ceased to make part of the Divine Intelligence when beside intuitive thought she got another character, by virtue of which she assumed her proper substance. She has her own work, as have all things that possess reality. Looking towards her prior, she thinks; looking towards herself, she preserves her own Being; looking towards her consequent, she orders, administers, and governs it. . . .

## VIII. OF NATURE, OR THE CREATIVE SOUL; AND THAT THE SOUL'S LIFE IS IN ALL ITS DEGREES A MEDITATION

*Plotinus Enn., III. viii. 4*

If one were to ask of Nature to what end she creates, supposing that she chose to lend an ear to the questioner and speak with him, this is what she would say: "It were more seemly not to question, but like me to understand in silence: for I am a silent one, and to talk is not my custom. What must thou understand? This: that the created world is my vision, child of my silence, an object of meditation naturally generated; that because I am myself the child of such a meditation<sup>1</sup> I inherit a nature which loves vision, and that which meditates in me creates its own object, as the geometers when they meditate draw lines. Yet I draw no lines: only whilst I meditate the outlines of bodies take substance, as though they had fallen from my lap." I have this singularity from my mother and those who engendered me;<sup>2</sup> as they are children of a meditation, so my birth in turn came about by

<sup>1</sup> Viz., the meditation of the Intellectual Soul.

<sup>2</sup> Viz., the Intellectual Soul and the rational creative principles (lōgoi)."

no action<sup>1</sup> of theirs; from the self-meditation of Principles that are greater than I, I was generated."

What is the meaning of these sayings? They signify that Nature is a soul, child of a prior Soul which lives with a stronger life; that quietly she maintains a meditation within herself, directed neither to what is above her nor to what is below; that she contains herself where she is, within her own steadfastness, in a kind of general sensibility; that by this awareness or sensibility she beheld, in so far as it was possible for her, what lay next below her, and so sought nothing more—for the child of meditation she had brought to fulfilment was a shining thing and lovely.

If we wish to ascribe to her a kind of awareness or perception, this cannot be the same which in other cases we intend by "perception" or "awareness," but its analogue; as we might assimilate the consciousness which we have in sleep to that of waking life. For Nature's meditation is her repose: her object arises while she rests in and with herself, because she is herself a product of meditation. Soundlessly she meditates; but dimly. For there is another and clearer meditation, whereof hers is but the phantasm.

Hence it is that the child she generated is altogether impotent,<sup>2</sup> since a weak meditation generates a weak object. In like manner there are men too weak for meditation, who find in action a shadow of meditation and reason. The method of meditation is to them insufficient, because of the impotence of Soul in them: not being able sufficiently to

<sup>1</sup> Praxis, action, is contrasted by Plotinus, as by Aristotle, with Theōria, meditation, the other great form of energy. In the last analysis, however, according to Plotinus, Praxis is Theōria in a weaker shape due to the intrusion of Matter and therefore confined to the sensible universe.

<sup>2</sup> The physical world has not the power of reflecting itself in further worlds, as Nature reflects herself in the physical world and each of the higher Realities in the Reality immediately below it. So Schelling says that "the dead and unconscious products of Nature are only abortive attempts of Nature to reflect herself" (*Transcendental Idealism*, p. 341). Nature for him, as for Plotinus, is *ein schlafender Geist*.

possess their vision, and so continuing unsatisfied, they crave to see it corporeally and for that cause fall into action, that with their eyes they may see what with their intelligence they could not. Thus in their creating they wish themselves\* to look upon their object, to meditate and perceive it, and desire that others should do likewise, when they have expressed it as best they may in action.

And so we shall find that everywhere creation and action are either the impotence of meditation or its secondary accompaniment: impotence, if one has nothing beside the action; accompaniment, if one has for meditation something other and prior, better than ourselves have produced. For who that is strong enough to meditate upon the original turns by choice to its phantasm? Witness the circumstance that among children it is the dunces who betake themselves to the crafts and manual employments, because they are not competent to learning and meditation.

#### IX. THAT THE SOUL IS NOT FALLEN; AND THAT THE CREATED UNIVERSE IS GOOD<sup>1</sup>

*Plotinus Enn., II. ix. 4*

If they say that the Soul created because she had "lost her wings,"<sup>2</sup> that was not spoken of the General Soul. And if on their own authority they uphold that she created because she had fallen, let them declare the cause of her Fall.

Since when is she fallen? If from all eternity, this is a confession that she will remain fallen. But if her Fall had a beginning, why was not that beginning earlier?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This argument is directed against the Valentinian Gnostics, who taught that the sensible universe is to be abhorred, and ascribed its creation to the error or "Fall" of Achamoth (equivalent to the General Soul). See Irenæus, *adv. Haereticos*, I, 24. Cf. lvii.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Phaedr.* 246 C.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Parmenides' argument against a creation of the world in time (fragm. 8, Diels).

For our part, we contend, not that the Creative Soul fell, but that in order to create she must have kept her station. For if she fell, it is evident she had forgotten the Heaven-world. But if she has forgotten, how comes it she is an Artificer? From what model can she create, saving the models which she there beheld?<sup>1</sup> And if she creates out of her memory of these, then there was no falling. Though her vision of them be dim, she falls not any the more for that; rather her inclination is towards her prior,<sup>2</sup> that she may see plain. For if she kept any the least memory of these things, she must have willed to retrace the way. What could she have hoped to gain for herself by making a universe? To say that she did this for her own glory is laughable, as though she were to be credited with the feelings which mortal artists have.

If it was by discourse of reason she created, and not by force of her own nature (she being properly the creative power), how can she have made the universe we know? And when will she destroy it?<sup>3</sup> If she repents its creation, why does she delay? If she has not yet repented, she will repent never: for by now she is grown accustomed, and by lapse of time, has learned to love her child. And if she waits for the particular souls,<sup>4</sup> these ought by now to have ceased from entry into birth, having long since in earlier births acquainted themselves with the evils of this place: so that by this there would be no more to come.

Again, we must not concede that our universe is an evil creation, for all the vexatious things that are in it. They ask too much who ask that it should be not the image of the intelligible universe, but its precise counterpart. What other

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 28 C-29 B.

<sup>2</sup> *πρὸς*, <η> *ἐκεῖ*.

<sup>3</sup> As the Gnostics held, she would one day do.

<sup>4</sup> This was the Valentinian explanation of the persistence of the physical world: *Iren., op. cit.*, I, 7.

fire could be a better image of the Fire that is Yonder than the fire we know? What earth better than the earth we know, save only the Earth that is Yonder? What sphere more nicely perfect or more orderly in its movement, saving Yonder the self-embraced revolution of the intelligible universe? What other sun betwixt the Heaven-Sun and this which is seen by us?<sup>1</sup>

X. OF THE DEPENDENCE OF THE SOUL FROM THE  
DIVINE INTELLIGENCE

*Plotinus Enn.*, v. 1. 3

Now since Soul is so honourable and so divine a thing, be from hence forward of good hope that thou by such a vehicle mayest reach God. Raise thyself towards him, having such a helper: surely close at hand thou shalt light upon him; there are not so many things between thee and him.<sup>2</sup>

After the divine Principle of Soul thou must conceive another yet more divine, her neighbour next above. This will be prior to Soul, and from it Soul will depend. For whilst the Soul is a Real Thing, as our argument has declared her, she is nevertheless but a sort of image of the Intelligence; as the uttered thought is an image of the thought in the Soul, so is the Soul herself the uttered thought of the Intelligence and the sum of that activity whereby the Intelligence projects life into a further Substance—as fire, beside the heat which rests within it, has a second activity of radiated heat. But in the world Yonder we are to conceive, not that the first activity flows out and away, but that it persists in the original Substance undiminished, even whilst the other comes into being.

Deriving thus from the Intelligence, the Soul is herself intellective. Intelligence in her is exhibited in ratiocination;

<sup>1</sup> Plotinus is here arguing against the Gnostic view that there is another created universe, made of pure Form (εἰδός) or Rational Principle (λόγος).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* xli, 1, "Prope est a te Deus, tecum est, intus est."

and she is in turn perfected by the Divine Intelligence, who has reared, as it were, to maturity the child whom he engendered imperfect by comparison with himself. Her substance derives from the Intelligence: likewise her active creative principle consists in her vision of that Intelligence. For when she looks therein, she has within herself as a true possession the objects of her thought and her activity.<sup>1</sup> These are properly the only activities of Soul, which proceed by way of intellection and out of her own nature. All that is lower than these has a foreign origin, and is therefore no activity but a passive experience of the Soul, conceived as we have conceived her.

Thus in two ways the Intelligence makes the Soul yet more divine: first as her Father; then as being present in her. The two Substances are not separated save by this, that they are not identical: they are related by way of continuous succession, and as Form to recipient of Form: even the Matter of the Intelligence is beautiful, because it is simple and keeps the likeness of the Intelligence.<sup>2</sup>

And what manner of Being the Intelligence must be, appears already from this, that it is higher than so high a thing as Soul.

<sup>1</sup> When the Soul "reverts" to the intelligence, she knows things not by discursive reason but as the Intelligence knows them, by intuition; she apprehends Reality directly, because she *is* Reality. Cf. xlv.

<sup>2</sup> Soul is Form in relation to Body; but in so far as she makes herself a passive vehicle to receive the "illumination" of the Intelligence, she may be called the "Matter" of the Intelligence. Cf. xxx. For the sense in which the higher Principles are said to be "simpler," see xv, note.

### III

## THE DIVINE INTELLIGENCE

### XI. THAT INTELLIGENCE IS A PRINCIPLE PRIOR TO SOUL

*Plotinus Enn.*, v. ix. 4

WHY must we advance beyond Soul? Why may not we posit Soul as the First?

Because, first, Intelligence is other and better than Soul; and the better is naturally prior.<sup>1</sup> Soul does not when made perfect generate Intelligence, as is currently supposed. For how shall that which exists potentially come to actuality, unless there be a cause which provokes it to actuality? If there be no cause but chance, it may never be actualised. Therefore we must hold that the First Things are Principles existing in actuality, perfect, and lacking no completion; and that all imperfect things are consequent upon these and are made perfect by these their begetters, as fathers make perfect the children which in the beginning they engendered imperfect; and that at first the consequent is as Matter to its creator, but afterwards by the bestowal of Form it is brought to fulness.

Again, if Soul is passive to affection from without, and there must exist something that shall be impassive (else all things will in time perish), there must exist something prior to Soul.<sup>2</sup> Also, if Soul is in the sensible universe, and there must exist something outside the universe, thus again it follows that there

<sup>1</sup> Cf. i, init. The doctrine that the actualisation of the potential implies the existence of a prior actuality is Aristotelian: cf. *Met.* 1049b 24, 1050b 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedr.* 72; and xxxi below. Plotinus elsewhere teaches the "impassibility" of Soul; but here at least this is regarded as true only of her highest reach, where she identifies herself with the impassive Intelligence (cf. Aristotle, *de Anima* 412a 6, etc.).

is something prior to Soul ; for if to be in the universe is to be in Body and Matter, all things will lose their identity unless there be a prior, so that neither Man nor any of the creative principles will be eternal or self-identical.

From these and a multitude of other considerations it may be seen that Intelligence must be prior to Soul.

XII. THAT IF THERE BE A SENSIBLE UNIVERSE THERE MUST BE ALSO AN INTELLIGIBLE UNIVERSE OF REALS

*Plotinus Enn., v. viii. 7*

We are agreed that this sensible All has its existence and its quality from something other than itself. Are we to suppose, then, that its creator invented in his mind, first, the notion of earth, and that this should stand in the middle ; then water, to rest upon the earth, and the other things in their appointed order as far as the firmament ; then all living creatures, endowed with such several shapes as now they have, and the inward organs of each kind, and the exterior parts ; and then, when he had arranged<sup>1</sup> in his thought the several kinds, put his hand at last to the work ?

But, first, no such invention was possible : for whence should he obtain the notion of what he had never seen ? Nor, again, supposing that he had obtained it from another, was it possible for him to make a world as our craftsmen make furniture, by use of hands and implements ; for hands and feet are later than the making of the world.

It remains, then, that whilst all things exist in one Principle,<sup>2</sup> yet by the nearness of that Principle to another (as nearness is reckoned in the Real), because there was no barrier between, there appeared, as it were, suddenly, a sem-

<sup>1</sup> *διατίθηρα*.

<sup>2</sup> The two Principles are Intelligence and Matter. The doctrine cannot fairly be called dualistic : for the two worlds are not separated in space or time ; and Plotinus does not suppose that there was ever a Chaos existing over against Mind and independent of it.



blance or image of the prior: whether immediately generated, or by the mediation of the Soul or some part of the Soul, it is no matter to our present purpose. From that world, at any rate, came the totality of sensible things, and they exist there with a more perfect beauty; for the things here are alloyed, but the things there are without alloy. . . .

### XIII. THE UNIVERSE OF REALS DESCRIBED

*Plotinus Enn.*, v. viii. 4

In that kingdom is "ease of living":<sup>1</sup> they have truth for mother and nurse, and their essence and nurture is truth. For spectacle they have a world, and that not of generation, but of true Being; and in beholding others they behold themselves. For all things Yonder are translucent: nothing is dark, nothing impenetrable, but each one to each one inwardly manifest, and all things manifest; for light is manifest to light. Every one contains all things in himself, and again beholds all in another; so that all are everywhere, and the whole is in each as in the sum, and the splendour infinite. Each thing is great Yonder, where even the small is great: the sun Yonder is one with all the stars, and every star with the sun and all its fellows. A different character dominates in each; but each also declares all.<sup>2</sup> Movement exists Yonder in its purity, for there is no moving object distinct from the movement to confound its motion; likewise Rest exists there undistracted, because it is not contaminated with the unresting; and the Beautiful is beautiful, because it does not inhere in the not-beautiful.<sup>3</sup> No one walks there as upon an alien earth: for each the

<sup>1</sup> A reminiscence of Homer's phrase, "the gods who have an easy life."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and Grace*, 3: "Chaque monade est un miroir vivant, représentatif de l'univers suivant son point de vue." Also Croce, *Logic*, pp. 75 ff. (Eng. trans.), on the unity in distinction of the true concepts or concrete universals. Plotinus's doctrine apparently goes back to Numenius (*fragm.* 15, Mullach).

<sup>3</sup> ἐν τῷ <μῇ> καλῷ.

environment is his own essence, and in the climbing, as it were, the starting-point moves with him, and he is never other than the place in which he is. For the substrate is Intelligence, and he is himself Intelligence: as in this visible firmament the stars might know this sensible light which illumines it, because they are themselves made of this light.<sup>1</sup> In this world, however, one part would be dependent from another, and each would be a part only; but Yonder each is eternally dependent from the whole, and is at once itself and the whole. For the part indeed is manifest there, but to the penetrating vision the whole is revealed in it: as though the beholder were possessed of Lynceus' eyes, who was said to see the very bowels of the earth, a story shadowing forth the eyes which are Yonder.

Of that seeing there is no weariness, nor satiety to bring cessation of vision. For there was no emptiness before, that the vision should come to satiety and accomplishment of its want, and so be content; nor is the thing seen alien to the seer, that the Objects in the Intelligence should be displeasing to the Subject; nor are the divine things corruptible with time. There is no satiety there, in that the fulfilment brings no contempt of that which fulfils: for the beholder, looking, is drawn to look the more, and seeing himself infinite and the objects of his vision infinite he is obedient to his proper nature. . . .

#### XIV. OF TIME AND ETERNITY

*Plotinus Enn.*, v. i. 4

. . . Whatsoever man is filled with admiration for the spectacle of this sensible universe, having regard to its greatness and loveliness and the ordinance of its everlasting movement, having regard also to the gods which are in it, divinities both visible and invisible, and daemons, and all

<sup>1</sup> εἰ πως κατὰ . . . τῷ ἐξ αὐτοῦ φῶναι νοήσῃ τὰ ἄστρα.

creatures and plants; let him next lift up his thoughts to the truer Reality which is its archetype. There let him see all things in their intelligible nature, eternal not, with a borrowed eternity, but in their proper consciousness and their proper life; their captain also he shall see, the uncontaminable Intelligence, and the Wisdom that passes approach,<sup>1</sup> and the true age of Kronos, whose name is Fulness and Intelligence.<sup>2</sup> For in him are embraced all deathless things, every intelligence, every god, every soul, immutable for ever. It is well with him: what should he seek to change? He has all things present to him: whither should he move?<sup>3</sup> He seeks not even increase of his own nature: for he is most perfect. Wherefore also all things are perfect which are present to him, that he may be wholly perfect, having nothing that is not of his own kind, embracing nothing that does not know; and this knowing is not by exploration, but by possession.

He did not at first lack this blessed state, then win it: all things are his in one eternity, and the true eternity is his, which time does but mimic; for time must fetch the compass of the Soul, ever throwing a past behind it, ever in chase of a future. The objects for Soul are successive, now Socrates and now a horse, always some one thing out of all; but the Intelligence knows all things together. He embraces all, and all are stayed in his unchanging substance. We may say of him only "He is", his present is for ever. Futurity belongs not to him: for the "then" is contained in his present. There is no past for him: for in that world nothing passes, but all things endure for ever, steadfast in their identity, as it were content with their condition.<sup>4</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the Intellectualive Soul.

<sup>2</sup> Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus, the successive rulers of Olympus, were taken by Platonists as types of the One, the Intelligence and the Soul: cf. Plato, *Crat.* 396. Plotinus derives Kronos from koros, fulness—*Enn.* V. i. 7 and V. ix. 8 are against translating koros "the Son" here—and nous, Intelligence.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 1074b 25; and with what follows, 1072b 7 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 37 D ff.

## XV. THAT THE REAL IS NOT AN ABSTRACT UNIFORMITY, BUT AN ORGANIC LIFE

*Plotinus Enn., vi. vii. 12-15*

12. . . . In the Real there is no poverty or incapacity: all things there are filled with life and surge with life. The stream of their Being is from one fountain-head; but this latter is not comparable to a uniform wind or a uniform heat; rather it is like a single quality which should embrace and preserve within itself all the qualities, sweetness conjoined with fragrance, and the quality of wine, and the properties of all relishes, the vision of colours, and whatever is cognisable by touch; likewise whatever can be heard, all melodies and every rhythm.

13. For neither the Intelligence nor the Soul which derives from the Intelligence is "simple." All things are internally complex in proportion as they are properly simple, that is, in proportion as they are not composite, or in proportion as they are originative causes or activities. The activity of the lowest cause is "simple" as being the limit of creation: to the highest all activities belong.<sup>1</sup> The *movement* of the Intelligence is indeed constant and unvarying, immutable for ever: yet the Intelligence is not uniform in its parts, but embraces all things; for the part is itself not internally uniform, but is susceptible of infinite analysis. . . .

14. That the Intelligence cannot have the bare uniformity of a mathematical unit, may be seen also from the example of particular intellectual Realities. Take for illustration what formative principle you will, of plant or animal. Were it a unity without implicit variety, it would not be a formative principle, and its product would be bare Matter. The prin-

<sup>1</sup> The term "simple" (*haplous*) may describe either absence of internal differentiation, or organic unity. The higher a thing stands in the scale of Being, the less simple it is in the former sense, the more simple in the latter. Complete simplicity in the first meaning of the word is found only in Matter; in the second, only in the One. See also Proclus, *Inst. Theol.* 59.

ciple must translate itself into every organ, so that it may penetrate each point of the Matter and leave no particle the same. Thus a face is not an undifferentiated mass, but has nose and eyes. A nose, again, is not a unity: it cannot be a nose without embracing diversities; were it a simple unity, it must be mere mass.

Infinity belongs to the Intelligence in this sense, that [the whole Intelligence and each of its parts] are to be regarded as unit-multiplicities.<sup>1</sup> They have the unity not of a building, but of a formative principle implicitly manifold. In the single system of the Intelligence are embraced as in an envelope other envelopes within, other systems and powers and intuitions: it may be analysed not by a straight severance, but by progressive explication of the implicit.<sup>2</sup> Its systems are comparable to living creatures encompassed within the living creature which is the universe, and others again within these, down to the smaller creatures and the lesser powers, until the analysis reach its term in an atomic Form. . . .

15. The Intelligence might be likened to a complex living sphere; or one may picture a something having the faces of all things, radiating light from living faces; or again, a coalescence of all purified souls, perfect in their complete attainment, and the universal Intelligence enthroned upon the summits of the souls, flooding that place with an intellectual radiance. In such imagining the beholder would in some sense view Reality from without, as an object external to his own existence. But he must himself become Reality, and be made one with the vision.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ὅτι καὶ ὅς ἐν πολλὰ.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* the relations subsisting within the Real cannot be adequately exhibited under the formal schematism of dichotomy. The whole is not divided in its parts, but contains their multiplicity implicit in its unity. The parts are no less real than the whole: for they severally imply the whole. The "intelligible world" is not a hierarchy of abstractions, but a system of "concrete universals."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ix, lxviii.

## XVI. HOW THE REAL IS RELATED TO THE INTELLIGENCE

*Plotinus Enn., v. v. 1, 2*

Is it possible to hold that the Intelligence, which is true and essential intelligence, may one day judge falsely, and think something other than Reality? Assuredly not. In ceasing to be intelligent, it would cease to be the Intelligence: it must know, therefore, eternally, and forget never; its knowing cannot be conjectural, nor equivocal, nor like hearsay information. Nor can it depend upon proof. If any hold that a part of its knowledge is obtained demonstratively, yet there must be *some* truth immediately evident to it. Reflection indeed certifies us that all its knowledge is thus immediate, since there is no principle by which to mark off the immediate from the rest. But it is sufficient that they confess a part to be immediate. Whence, we ask, arises this immediate certainty for the Intelligence? And what assurance can the thoughts furnish to the thinker, that they are in accordance with the reality?

In regard to sense-knowledge, which is supposed to carry the plainest assurance of truth, a suspicion often arises that the seeming substantiality may lie not in the substantive object, but in the affection of the sense-organ; and intelligence or discursive reason must be called in to resolve the question. Indeed, even if it be granted that what the perceptive faculty apprehends exists in the substantive perceived-object, yet perception can know only a ghost of this latter; it cannot seize the object itself, which remains external to it.

Is it so with the Intelligence?

It has knowledge, and the objects of its knowledge are not sensible but intelligible: now, if these objects are other than itself, how can it light upon them? The possibility of its not finding them, is the possibility of its not knowing them save when it finds them: whereas we saw that it must know them eternally. And if it be answered that the Intelligence is "conjoined" with its objects, we must examine the term "conjunction."

Secondly, in this view the thoughts of the Intelligence will be impressions: that is, they will be comparable to strokes imprinted from without. But how shall the Intelligence receive an impress? And what shape will such impressions have?

Third: intellection, no less than perception, will be concerned with a world external to it: How then shall it be distinguished from perception? Are we to say that it apprehends smaller Objects? And how shall it know that it has apprehended them truly? How shall it know if this or that object is good, or beautiful, or just? Each of the objects is other than the knower, and he has within himself no principles of judgment whereon to base his trust: principles and objects being alike extraneous, the truth remains outside.

Fourth: either the objects are insensible and devoid of life and intelligence, or they possess intelligence. If the latter, we have here intelligence and its object conjoined, and so we have truth: this then will be the primary Intelligence, and we shall proceed to inquire how this truth and the Intelligence and the object of intellection are related—are the knower and the known associated in one substance, yet still two and distinct? or if not, what is the relation? If, on the contrary, the objects are not intelligent and not living, what are they? Not premisses, not axioms; and not predicates. For so the Intelligence might predicate them of other things, and they would not be the Real Things themselves: they would be like the beauty which we predicate of Justice notwithstanding Beauty and Justice are not identical. And if it be said that they are simple Reals, distinct essences of Justice and Beauty, then, firstly, the intelligible will neither constitute a unity nor be embraced in any unity; but each object will be severed from the rest. Where and by what spatial extension are they severed? And how will the Intelligence light upon them, travelling from one to another? How will they persist, and how persist in the same substance? What shape, what impress can they have? Unless indeed they are like figures stored

away, fashioned of gold or some other kind of Matter by some modeller or painter? But if so, the intelligence which contemplates them will be sense-perception; and again, why should one such figure be named Justice, and another get some other name?

But the chiefest proof is that before indicated. If we should go so far as to grant that the objects are extraneous and apprehended as extraneous by the Intelligence, it must follow that the Intelligence does not contain the truth of them, but is deceived in all its intuitions. For the true Realities must be the extraneous objects, and the Intelligence will take cognisance of these without possessing them: in such knowing it can seize only their ghosts. Thus, not possessing the true objects, but containing only phantasms of the true, it will have for truth no truth, but falsehood. If it knows that its thoughts are false, it will thus confess itself interdicted from truth; and if it knows not even this, but erroneously supposes them true, the double falsity of judgment will increase its distance from the truth. It is doubtless for the same reason that the senses yield no truth, but only opinion: opinion receives at second hand—whence its name<sup>1</sup>—and that impression which it receives is distinct from the extraneous source of the impression.

Now an intelligence which does not possess truth will not be truth, nor true Intelligence, nor indeed intelligence at all. But elsewhere than in intelligence truth cannot subsist.

2. We must not seek, therefore, the objects of intellection in anything extraneous; we must not say that in the Intelligence are mere imprints of the Real Things; we must not exile the Intelligence from truth, making its objects unknowable and non-present and in the end abolishing the very notion of an Intelligence. If we are to find a place both for knowledge and for truth, if we are to preserve a universe of Reals, if we

<sup>1</sup> There is here apparently a play on *dēchōmāi*, receive, and *dōxā*, opinion (Plato's name for the uncriticised judgment of sense)



are to make possible a knowledge not of qualities but of essences—since in knowing the qualities of a thing we possess its ghost and vestige, but do not possess the objects themselves in consubstantiality and coalescence with the knower—if this is to be, then we must place all Reality within the veritable Intelligence.

By this hypothesis, the Intelligence will know, and know truly, without possibility of forgetting or necessity of search: truth will be within it, and it will be the living and intuitive seat of Reality. Nothing less than this will satisfy the notion of a supremely blessed Principle: without this, where is its worth and majesty? By our hypothesis, again, it has no need of demonstration nor of any assurance, that things are as it thinks them. For itself is as it thinks it, itself to itself immediately evident. It has immediate knowledge of its prior, by its derivation therefrom; of all that follows upon this prior, it has immediate knowledge by identity with it. Than itself it can have no surer witness regarding the latter, that it exists Yonder and exists really. So that the veritable truth is consistent not with an alien Reality, but with itself: it affirms nothing other than itself; it *is*, and what it is, that it affirms. How then might such truth be “tested”? Whence shall the test be obtained? No test can appeal to another Reality than the judgment of the Intelligence; although one profess to introduce an independent standard, this must be referred to the original judgment, from which it is not distinct. For there can be found no Reality truer than the truth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Spinoza’s doctrine that an *idea vera* is its own “norm” of truth (*Ethics* II. 43 S.); and the modern theories of consistency as the test of truth. The Plotinian view derives historically from Aristotle (cf. *Metaph.* xii. 9; *de Anima* iii. 4). It is important to observe that Plotinus does not make Reality “the work of the mind.” The Intelligence is neither more nor less real than the Forms which it contains. Even at this level of reality and of truth, thought and its object are still distinguishable though inseparable moments; the opposition is completely transcended only in the One.

## IV

### THE ONE

XVII. THAT ALL THINGS EXIST BY VIRTUE OF THE ONE;  
AND THAT THE ONE IS NOT ANY EXISTING THING

*Plotinus Enn., vi. ix. 1*

ALL that exists, both the primary Reals, and whatever is in any sense called real, exists by virtue of the One. Unless a thing be one, it cannot be : abstract its principle of unity, and it is no longer the thing we say it is.

It is evident that an army or a choir or a herd, ceasing to be one, will cease to exist. So it is also with a house or a ship : each has a unity, which if it lose, the house is no more a house nor the ship a ship. And thus in general, there could be no continuous magnitude unless unity were present in it : for certainly, if such a body be severed, it suffers alteration of its being in proportion as it loses unity.

So again, the bodies of plants and animals, which are all of them units, if they be broken into multiplicity and elude their bond of oneness, lose the being which they had and are changed to something other than themselves ; and the like is true of all units. Health is present when the body forms a unified system ; beauty, when the principle of unity invests all the parts ; and the soul's excellence, when the soul is gathered into unity in a single concord.

Now when we reach Soul, Soul that draws all things into one, the maker and moulder, the shaper and builder, shall we say that Soul is the bestower of unity and that Soul is the One? No : as the other gifts which she bestows on Body, shape and form and the like, are not the Soul herself, but characters distinct from her, so we must hold that in giving

unity she gives what is other than herself; that she makes each thing one after the pattern of the One, as each man after the pattern of Man, embracing in Man Man's proper unity. For any thing of all that are called unities is so far truly one as it possesses essential Being: so that the less real has less of unity, the more real more. Thus Soul, while distinct from the One, has in fuller measure than Body, in proportion as she is more real, a fuller unity; yet not Unity-absolute. She is indeed *one*, but she is one *soul*, and may be said to have the One as an accident; Soul, like Body, is distinguishable from pure Unity. The discrete bodily unities, such as a choir, are furthest from Unity proper; the continuous somewhat nearer; Soul's unity nearer still; yet even she does but communicate in the One.

If Soul be accounted identical with the One, for the reason that she could not be, and not be one, we must answer, first, that no particular thing can be, and not be one, yet the One is distinct from all particular things: we do not say that Body *is* Unity, but that Body *has* Unity. Again, even a single soul is manifold, though she be not a manifold of parts: <sup>1</sup> a multitude of powers within her, ratiocination, appetite, apprehension, are held together by her unity as by a chain. Soul, because she is herself one, imposes unity upon a lower principle; but she receives her own unity from a higher.

XVIII. THAT THE UNITY OF THE ONE TRANSCENDS THE  
DUALITY OF SUBJECT AND OBJECT

*Plotinus Enn., III. viii. 8, 9*

8. . . . As in meditation we climb from Nature to Soul and from Soul to Intelligence, our meditations grow less and ever less external; progressively they are made one with the thinker.

<sup>1</sup> The whole of the Soul, as of any intelligible principle, is implicit in each part: her "powers" are not "faculties" in the sense offensive to modern psychologists. Cf. v.

For the zealous soul, knowledge, straining towards perfect intellection, is convergent with the object known. Hence, plainly, at the level of the Intelligence the two are one, not by assimilation, as at Soul's highest reach, but by essence, because to be is to think and to think is to be.<sup>1</sup> . . .

g. . . . Yet there must be that which is beyond Intelligence : first, because all multiplicity is consequent upon unity. Intelligence is number ; and even this intelligible number has its source in a corresponding kind of unity. The Intelligence is two things at once, at once itself and its object ; and if it is two, we must lay hold upon that which is prior to the two.

What will this prior be? the intellective subject? But there can be no intellective subject without an object : if it is to involve no object, it will not be a subject. If, then, the Principle prior to this duality cannot be the subject, but must wholly escape duality, it must be something beyond Intelligence.

Why, again, may not it be the intelligible object without the subject? Because there can be no such object apart from a subject.

But if it is neither subject nor object of intellection, what is it? It is that, we must answer, from which both the Intelligence and its consubstantial object depend. . . .

#### XIX. THAT THE ONE IS PRIOR TO THE SUM OF THINGS

*Plotinus Enn., III. viii. 9*

. . . The sum of things is not the Beginning, but out of the Beginning is the sum of things. Were the Beginning itself the sum, or one thing in the sum, it could not generate all ; it would not be the source of multiplicity, but itself a multiplicity. For the generating Principle is everywhere simpler than the generated. Thus if this Principle generated the Intelligence, it must be simpler than the Intelligence.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. xvi.

If, moreover, the One be supposed identical with the sum of things, it must be identified either with each thing severally or with all together. If it be the assemblage of all things taken together, its Being will be consequent upon the totality; or, if it be prior to them, it will be a Principle distinct from them. Again, it cannot be coeval with them, or it will not be their source. But it must be source of all and prior to all, that the sum in turn may exist. If, on the other part, it be identical with each thing severally, any thing will be identical with any other; all, moreover, will exist together without distinction.

Thus the One cannot be any existing thing, but is prior to the sum of existence.

#### XX. THAT THE ONE IS THE UNDIVIDED SOURCE OF ALL LIFE

*Plotinus Enn., III. viii. 10*

What then is the One? It is the possibility of all things: without whose existence all would be non-existent, and the Intelligence also non-existent, which is the primal and all-embracing Life. That which is above Life must be Life's cause; for the actuality of Life, that is, the universe of things, is not original, but is itself poured out as from a spring. Conceive a spring having no alien source; giving itself to all rivers, yet not exhausted therein, but itself abiding at rest;<sup>1</sup> and the rivers that have gone out from it journeying a while together in one flood before they run their several courses, yet each as it were already conscious in what place its own waters shall find issue. Or conceive the life of a great plant pervading every part, whilst the source of that life itself endures undispersed, having its seat, as it were, in the root: this it is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. iv, vi, and x, and *Introd.*, p. 16. Athanasius uses this same metaphor to explain the Christian Trinity: "As the source is not the river, nor the river the source, but the two are the same water flowing from the source into the river: so the Godhead communicates itself from the Father to the Son without exhaustion or division" (*Expos. Fid.* 2).

that furnishes all the multiple life of the plant, yet itself remains not multiple but source of the multiplicity. Thereat we do not wonder; yet it may well be matter of wonder, how the manifold of Life arose from the not-manifold, and had not been unless the not-manifold had been before it. For to make a universe the Source is not divided: its division would have destroyed the universe with itself; had the Source not remained distinct within its own nature, thenceforth no generation would have been possible. Hence there is reference everywhere back to some unity. For every particular, there is a particular unity to which it may be referred; our universe carries reference to a unity prior to it, but not yet simple Unity; and so always, until the simple Unity be reached, which bears no reference to another.

Now, in considering the unity of a plant—that is, the enduring source of its life—or the unity of an animal or of a soul or of our universe, we seize in each object the centre of power and seat of value: when, therefore, we consider the Unity of the true Reals, which is the Source and the Fountain-head and the Power, shall we be incredulous and suspect that this Unity is *nothing*? Certainly it is nothing of those things whereof it is the Source. But it is that which exists above them all, and beyond all predicates; of which we may say neither “It is Real” nor “It is Reality” nor yet “It is Life”; yet if thou strip away even the “It exists,” and grasp it so, the wonder of it shall possess thee. . . .

XXI. A FORMAL PROOF THAT THE GOOD IS IDENTICAL WITH THE ONE

*Proclus, Inst. Theol., 13* •

It is the character of every good to unify that which participates it; and all unification is a good; and the Good is identical with the One.

For if it is the character of the Good to conserve all that

exists (wherefore also it is the object of all pursuit) ; and that which conserves and holds together the being of each particular thing is Unity (since each is maintained in existence by its proper unity, and by dispersion displaced from existence) : then the Good, wherever present, makes the participant a unit and holds its being together by unification.

Conversely, if it is the character of the One to draw together and hold together each being, it makes each perfect by its presence : thus to all things unification is a good.

And if unification is a good in itself, and<sup>1</sup> the Good is likewise productive of unity, then the Good-absolute and the One-absolute are the same Principle, for all beings at once the source of unity and the source of goodness. Wherefore those things which in any wise fall away from the Good are at the same stroke deprived of participation in the One ; and those which are infected with division and lose their portion in the One are in like manner deprived of the Good also.

XXII. THAT TO OUR UNDERSTANDING THE ONE IS KNOWABLE  
ONLY BY THE WAY OF NEGATION

*Plotinus Enn.*, vi. ix. 3, 4

3. . . . The Intelligence is a thing, and belongs to Real Being : the One is not any thing, but prior to all things, neither is it a kind of Real Being. Real Being possesses a character comparable to shape, the intelligible shape of the Real : the One is not shapen even by intelligible shape. For that Principle which generates all things cannot be any thing of them all. It is not a thing, it is not quality, it is not quantity, it is not Intelligence nor Soul. It does not move, and yet it is not at rest, either in space or in time : it is the Uniform-absolute, or rather the Formless, as being prior to all Form and prior to Motion and Rest. For these last are characters of Real Being, and make Reality manifold. If it

<sup>1</sup> ἀγαθὸν καθ' αὐτὸ καί.

be asked, why the One, having no movement, is not at rest, we answer, because only to a Being must one or both of these predicates apply. • A stationary object is at rest, but is not Rest; and so also, if the One be at rest, Rest will be added to it as an accident, and it will no longer remain simple. Even to name it the Cause, is to predicate an accident not of the One, but of ourselves: it signifies that whilst the One abides within itself we have something derived thence. He that would speak exactly must not name it by this name or by that; we can but circle, as it were, about its circumference, seeking to interpret in speech our experience of it, now shooting near the mark, and again disappointed of our aim by reason of the antinomies we find in it.

4. The greatest antinomy arises in this, that our understanding of it is not by way of scientific knowledge nor of intellection, as our understanding of other intelligible objects, but by a presence higher than all knowing. In taking knowledge of an object, the soul suffers defect of unity, and is not wholly one; for knowledge is an account of things, and an account is a manifold, and so our soul lapses into number and multiplicity, and misses the One. Wherefore she must travel beyond knowledge, and refuse all departure from her unity; she must withdraw herself from knowing and the knowable, and from every alien contemplation, be it never so fair; for all Beauty is consequent upon the One and has its origin from thence, as all the light of day is from the sun. Hence the word of the Master, that it overpasses speech and writing.<sup>1</sup> And yet we speak and write, seeking to forward the pilgrim upon his journey thither and out of ratiocination awaken the soul to vision, as men who point the road to a traveller desirous of viewing some spectacle. For the road may be taught, and the wayfaring; but the attainment of vision remains his task who has willed the attainment. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Epist.* vii, 341 C.



## XXIII. IN WHAT SENSE THE ONE IS A FREE AGENT

*Plotinus Enn., vi. viii. 7, 9, 11, 21*

7. Soul becomes free through participation in Intelligence, when her endeavour towards the Good is without hindrance; and all that she does in virtue of this is a free act.<sup>1</sup> Intelligence is free in virtue of its own nature. But the Good is itself the object of all pursuit; it is that whereby the other Principles are made free agents; it is that which gives power, to the Soul, of unhindered attainment, to the Intelligence, of unhindered possession. How then shall the Lord of all the derivative values, enthroned in primacy, whither all others would fain climb, whence all others depend and draw their powers, so that they are able to be free agents—how shall the Supreme be associated with such freedom as belongs to me or thee? Only by straining of terms did this “freedom” embrace even the Intelligence. And the matter might rest so: were it not that some may be found to sustain the over-hardy contention, proceeding from other grounds, that the Supreme is by chance that which it is and cannot determine its own essence, in that its Being is not self-derived: that thus it has no freedom and no choice, but in obedience to a necessity it creates or is stayed from creating.

This allegation annuls its own ground, and conducts to an antinomy. It is tantamount to a denial of all volition and free agency; nay, it destroys the very notion “choice”; so that these terms must be sounds without signification and names of things non-existent. For its upholder must not only deny that any act is within the choice of any agent: he must deny that he has the notion of choice or finds any meaning in the term. . . .

He is wrong, moreover, in saying that the One arose by chance. For chance operates only in a plurality and among

<sup>1</sup> Cf. li.

dependent existences.<sup>1</sup> It is not possible to hold that the Primal was generated by chance, or that it did not determine its own generation: for, being Primal, it was never generated. As for the contention that its creative action is not free, because determined by its nature, this is as much as to say that freedom lies only in a creation or an activity contrary to the agent's nature, which is absurd. . . .

Since, moreover, the "substance" <sup>2</sup> of the One is identical with its "activity" (for even at the grade of Intelligence the two are no longer distinct), we may not say that its activity is any more determined by its Being than its Being by its activity. Thus it is not true that the Supreme "acts as its nature requires it to act"; nor should its activity or "life" be considered as a consequence from its "essence." The "essence" is coexistent with the activity, or "congenerate" with it from everlasting: out of the identity of the two itself creates itself, a Principle self dependent or independent.

9. . . . To declare that the One is thus or thus, is to delimit it, and make it some particular thing. Whoso has seen it, he cannot say that it is thus, he cannot say that it is not thus; else one makes it an existing thing, for only existents are qualified by a "thus." The Supreme, then, is distinct from all that is thus or thus. In the vision of it there is no delimitation; all lower Principles the seer can name: of itself thou wilt say only that it is none of these things, but to be described, if at all, as that sum of all Power which is truly lord of itself; which is what it wills, or, in stricter truth, projects its will into the universe of Beings, setting up volition as a con-

<sup>1</sup> Chance is a *negative* cause, opposed to all rational system, and arising only from the resistance which Matter offers to the perfect realisation of Form. Hence its operation is confined to the world of Becoming (*Enn.* VI. viii. 10).

<sup>2</sup> When Plotinus, by a concession to the exigencies of language, speaks of the One as possessing substance, activity, etc., though these predicates are not strictly applicable to it (cf. xxii), he saves his position by inserting the word *ἡδὴν*, "as it were," represented here by inverted commas.

sequent, because itself is mightier than all willing. The One neither willed itself to be thus (for if so, itself must be a consequent), nor did another make it to be thus.

11. But what then is this Uncreated One? It may be that it is best to go away in silence, and in despair of understanding to question no further. For all enquiry conducts to a first principle, and finds its term in such a principle: and when a man has come to the world's end, what remains for question? . . . It would appear in fine that if we have reached this antinomy respecting the Supreme, we have reached it by first positing room and space, as it were a chaos, and thereafter introducing the Supreme Principle into this space already generated or pre-existent in our imagination. Having inserted God into this space of ours, we then propose certain questions, as, for instance, Whence came he there, and by what means? As though he were an intruder, we have made his presence and "essence" matter for our enquiry—as though he had been cast up hither out of some gulf, or down from some high place.

We must remove the cause of the antinomy: that is, we must exclude from our intuition of God all spatial figure, not supposing him to exist in any environment, whether as eternally placed and established therein, or as an incomer from without, but only to exist, in whatever sense existence belongs to him, since by a necessity of language we are compelled to say of him "He is." All things, and space among them, are later than God; nay, for the matter of that, space is later than all else. . . .

21. . . . Making abstraction, then, of all attributes, until only God is left, ask not, "What shall I add to God?"; but examine rather if there be not something, which in thy thought of him thou hast not yet abstracted. For to thee also it is possible to lay hold upon a Principle, whereof nothing but itself may be predicated, wherein nothing but itself may be

grasped. This is the Supreme, and this alone is truly free, which has not even itself for master : for whereas in all else there is a self and a not-self, this alone is all self and very self.

#### XXIV. PROCLUS' DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE HENADS OR UNITS

*Proclus, Inst. Theol., 21, 64, 116, 123, 133*

21. Every series originates from a unitary term and proceeds to a plurality co-ordinate therewith ; and the plurality of any series may be referred to a single unitary term.

For the unitary term, in that it contains a principle of origin, generates the appropriate plurality. Thus the whole of any single causal chain or single series derives from its first term its expansion into plurality : if the first term abode sterile within itself, there could be no series and no chain. And thus also the plurality is again referable to the single common cause of all the co-ordinate terms. . . .

Hence it is apparent, that as unity and plurality coexist in Body, the one Nature has the many natures dependent from it, and, conversely, these are derived from the one Nature of the whole ; that the soul-series, deriving from the one primal Soul, expands to a multiplicity of souls which is again reducible to the one ; that for intellectual Reality there is an intellectual unitary term and a multiplicity of intelligences proceeding from a single Intelligence and reverting thither ; and that for the One which is prior to all things there is the multiplicity of the Henads, and for the Henads the tension linking them with the One. Thus there are Henads consequent upon the primal One, intelligences consequent on the primal Intelligence, souls consequent on the primal Soul, and a plurality of natures consequent on the universal Nature. ●

64. Every original unitary term gives rise to two series, one of self-complete substances, and one of irradiations which have their substantiality in something other than themselves.

For since the outgoing proceeds by remission<sup>1</sup> through terms akin to their substantifying causes, from the things wholly perfect must arise things perfect in their kind, and by these latter the origin of things imperfect must be mediated in due sequence. So that there will be one order of self-perfect substances and another of imperfect. . . . The former, whilst by their discrimination into plurality they fall short of their original unitary term, are yet in some wise assimilated to it by their self-perfect subsistence. The latter fall away both from the self-subsistent, as subsisting in another, and from the all-perfecting, as being imperfect. The outgoings advance through similars until they reach the altogether dissimilar.

Thus each of the original unitary terms gives rise to two series. . . . And so not every unity is a god, but only the self-perfect Henad ; not every intellectual property an intelligence, but only the essential , not every irradiation of Soul a soul, but there are also reflections of souls.

116. Every god is participable<sup>2</sup> except the One.

That the One is imparticipable, is evident : were it participated, it would become the unity of some particular thing and cease to be the cause of all alike,<sup>3</sup> of Beings and of the gods prior to Being. And that all the remaining Henads are participable, we shall prove from this, that if there be another imparticipable Henad consequent upon the original One, it will not be distinguishable from the One. . . .

<sup>1</sup> *I. e.* by a *gradual* lessening of power and perfection. The principle of continuity in devolution (cf. vi) is cardinal for Proclus, and underlies most of the elaborations characteristic of Neoplatonism in its later phase. "Eternity," as Boehme says, "bringeth nothing to birth but that which is like itself."

<sup>2</sup> *I. e.* predicable. The first term of each of Proclus' series is imparticipable : that is, we can say, "I am a soul," but not, "I am Soul," and similarly, "This is a one (or Henad), but not, "This is the One." The "gods" are simply the series of self-subsistent unities co-ordinate with the One. They seem to be conceived as "roots" or "seeds" of differentiation within the Undifferentiated.

<sup>3</sup> *δημιουργός*.

123. All that is divine is in itself, by reason of its transcendent unity, unspeakable and unknowable for all secondary existences ; but through the Beings which participate it it may be apprehended and known ; whence the One alone, being imparticipable, is altogether unknowable.

For all rational understanding, since it is concerned with intelligible notions, and consists in acts of intuition, is an understanding of Real Being, and the instrument whereby it apprehends truth is itself a part of the Real ; but the gods are beyond all Beings. Wherefore the Divine can be an object neither to opinion nor to discursive reason nor yet to intuition.<sup>1</sup> Now all existence is either sensible, and therefore object of opinion ; or real, and therefore object of intuition ; or else it is betwixt the two, at once real and generate, and therefore object of discursive reason. If, then, the gods are beyond Real Being and prior to all existence, we can have neither opinion concerning them, nor knowledge by discourse of reason, nor yet intellection of them.

Yet the nature of their individual properties is indirectly cognisable through their dependent Reals ; and that necessarily. For the differences within a participant order are determined by the individualities of the things participated : and each term of the dependent series participates, not every term of the higher (for there can be no conjunction of the altogether unlike), nor any term assigned by chance, but that especial term which is akin to it ; and from that term it proceeds.

133. . . . The divine individuality makes distinct the

<sup>1</sup> Neoplatonism recognises in all five grades of apprehension, corresponding to the five grades of Existence. At the bottom of the scale, Matter, being "unreal," is knowable only by an "indetermination of consciousness." At the top, the One, being "beyond Reality," is knowable only by unification in ecstasy. Between these extremes lie : on the animal level, "opinion," which deals with sensibles ; on the level of Soul, discursive reason, which deals with the concepts of science ; on the level of Intellect, intuitive reason, which knows the Forms.

several Henads or excellences of the several gods, so that each in respect of some especial individuation of God's goodness renders all things good, bringing to ripeness, or preserving in unity, or it may be shielding from harm. Each of these properties is a particular good, but not the sum of good: above them the Primal One has set the unitary cause of all. And thus the One is the Good, as being constitutive of all goodness. For not all the gods together may be equalled with the One, so far does it overpass in majesty all the divine host.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With this passage we may perhaps compare Schelling's identification of his Archetypes with the gods of mythology, as expressing individual aspects of the universal Godhead. Proclus was no more a genuine polytheist than Schelling was. The relation of the Henads to the One resembles that of God's attributes to God in the philosophy of Aquinas: of each attribute it can be said that it *is* God (*Summa contra Gentiles*, Book I).

## V

### MATTER

#### XXV. THAT THERE IS A COMMON SUBSTRATE OF ALL SENSIBLE OBJECTS<sup>1</sup>

*Plotinus Enn.*, II. iv. 6

. . . THAT there must be some Substrate of all bodies, distinct from the bodies themselves, appears from the transmutation of one element into another. For the destruction of the element transmuted cannot be complete, otherwise something existent will be vanishing into unreality; nor again can it be from absolute unreality that the new element has risen into being. What has taken place is the transmutation of one Form into another, while that which received the later Form and lost the earlier persists throughout unaltered.

This appears also from the consideration of destruction in general. For there can be destruction only of the composite: whence it follows that every individual thing is composite<sup>2</sup> and has both Matter and Form. The opinion, that whatever is destructible is composite, is supported by induction, and also by analysis—as when we analyse a bowl into gold and the gold into liquid and the liquid again, if it be destroyed, must similarly be replaced by some further thing.

The elements must be either Form or primary Matter or composite of both. But they cannot be pure Form: for without Matter they could have no bulk or magnitude. And they

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Aristot., Met.* 1042a 32 ff.; 1069b 3 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For no terrestrial object is indestructible as such, though the sense-universe as a whole is imperishable (*Enn.* II. i.).



cannot be primary Matter: for they are destructible. Therefore they are composite of Matter and Form. They are Form in respect of their quality and shape; Matter in respect of their indeterminate Substrate, since this latter is privation of Form.

XXVI. HOW FAR MATTER IS REAL; AND HOW FAR  
SENSIBLE OBJECTS

*Plotinus Enn., III. vi. 7*

We must return to an examination of the substrate Matter and of the things which we describe as "based" upon it, from which it will be seen that Matter is unreal<sup>1</sup> and impassive.

Matter is certainly incorporeal, inasmuch as Body is posterior to it and composite of Matter and not-Matter. It is this incorporeality that has caused Matter to be confused with the Real, each being other than Body.

Matter is not Soul or Intelligence or Life; it is not a Form or a rational principle or a term, but Indetermination; and since it does not create anything, it is not power.<sup>2</sup> Falling thus outside of all these classes, it should in strictness be denied even the appellation "real." There would be a propriety in terming it "unreal," not with such unreality as belongs to motion and rest,<sup>3</sup> but with a true unreality, as being a ghost or phantasm of bulk and no more than an aspiration towards substantial existence; incapable of movement, and yet not steadfast; in itself invisible, escaping the beholder; becoming a something when the eye is closed, disappearing

<sup>1</sup> *Mē ōn*, distinct from *ouk ōn* "non-existent": cf. Plato, *Soph.* 254-8. "Hypothetically real" has been suggested as a translation; but the Greek term affirms simply the negative character of Matter.

<sup>2</sup> Matter is not, like Soul, a potentiality of creating anything, but only a potentiality of *becoming* all things. Plotinus probably has the Atomists in mind.

<sup>3</sup> These are "unreal" in the sense that spiritual Reality transcends both; but they are "carried" by Reality (*Enn.* II. v. 5: cf. Plato, *Soph.* 250 B). Matter, on the other hand, is called "unreal" as being the "limiting case" of Reality. It is like *zero*, the ideal last term of an infinite diminishing series.

when the gaze is fixed on it;<sup>1</sup> continually exhibiting the reflections of opposites, at once small and great, less and more, defect and excess;<sup>2</sup> a ghost that never stays yet can never vanish, for it has not even this lowest degree of force; no force whatsoever reaches it from the Divine Intelligence, and there alone has it come to existence, where all Reality ceases. For this reason its professions are all of them lies. If it appear great, it is yet little; if it appear more, yet it is less. That reality which it has in the appearing is no reality; it is a fugitive bauble.

Wherefore the appearances which seem to arise in Matter are likewise baubles: they are precisely semblances within a semblance, comparable to the reflection in a glass of that which has its substantial existence outside the glass. The mirror, in appearance continually being filled, is in reality empty; while it simulates all things it possesses nothing.

These mimicries of things real which play in and out of Matter, semblances projected upon an unshapen semblance and made visible in it because of its unshapeness, appear to act upon it, but effect nothing; for they are exanimate and impotent and have no resistance. Matter, on its part, being equally destitute of resistance, they pass through it without breaking it, as through water, or as one might suppose shapes flung across the pretended void.<sup>3</sup>

If, indeed, the appearances which we see resembled the Realities from which they passed into Matter, one might readily suppose that Matter was affected by them, ascribing to them some measure of power inherited from their originals. But since in truth the reflections which we perceive are different in kind from the Realities which project them, we have here fresh proof that the affection of Matter is illusory, in that the reflection is itself illusory and bears no manner of likeness to its

<sup>1</sup> Cf. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plato, *Theæt.* 154.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Lucret.* II. 109 ff.

creator.<sup>1</sup> Being impotent and illusory and projected upon the illusory, as an image in a dream or in water or in a glass (save that in all these there is some assimilation of the projected to the projector), such a semblance cannot but leave Matter unaffected.

## XXVII. THE SAME

*Plotinus Enn., III. vi. 13, 14*

13. . . . Since the Principle in question (Matter) cannot be counted among the Reals, but must be altogether outside that Reality which they have and altogether other than they (they being rational principles and existing veritably), it follows of necessity that for the preserving, through this otherness, of the identity which is her portion Matter must be not only impassible to Reals but incapable of so entertaining any copy of things real as to make it part of her. Only thus can her otherness be complete; for if she had once absorbed into herself any Form, she must have been transmuted by her union with it, and thereby have lost her otherness and ceased to be the place and receptacle of all things.<sup>2</sup> It is necessary that she should remain unaltered by the incoming of the Forms and unaffected by their outgoing, in order that the succession of incoming and outgoing may be sustained perpetually. All that enters into her, then, is a ghost, the unreal entering into the unreal. But it may be that the act of entry, at least, is a reality? No: that which enters is illusory, and it is the law that the illusory shall not in any way participate Reality.

Is this illusory entrance into an illusion comparable to the

<sup>1</sup> This overstatement is best explained by the exigencies of Plotinus' ethical theory: cf. *Introd.*, p. 19. It violates the metaphysical principle of continuity, and is elsewhere (*e.g.* ix) contradicted by Plotinus himself.

<sup>2</sup> Terms used by Plato to describe his conception of the Substrate of Body, *Tim.* 49 A, 52 A. These have led many commentators, both ancient and modern, to identify the Platonic "Matter" with empty space. Plotinus, who himself holds that Matter has no extension, rejects this interpretation, and finds in Plato's language only a metaphorical expression of the relation between Matter and Reality. Chap. xviii. of the *Timaeus* should be closely compared with the present passage.

reflection in a glass of the images of those who gaze in it, persisting just so long as they gaze? Certainly, were the Reals eliminated from this world, then of all the appearances now, made visible in the sensible universe not one could persist for a moment's space. The glass of our comparison is, however, itself visible; for it too is in some degree Form. But the glass which is Matter, having nothing of Form, is itself invisible, otherwise it must have been seen in the beginning apart from the reflections; as we know that the air, when a sunbeam passes through it, is still invisible, because in the absence of the ray it was not seen. Now the cause, why the figures in a glass are accounted not real or less so than others, is that the containing mirror is perceived and is permanent, whilst the figures come and go. But Matter is not itself seen, either with the figures or without. Were it possible for the objects reflected in mirrors to remain without change, and had the mirrors themselves not been visible, the reality of the reflections would never have been doubted.

If a figure in a glass is something, we may grant as much to the sensible reflections in Matter. If it is nothing, but only the appearance of something, then we must speak also of the appearances cast upon Matter, whilst we find the cause of their appearing in the substantial existence of the Reals, which Reals participate eternally and really, Unreals unreally: for the condition of the latter cannot be precisely what it would have been in the absence of the Real, could we suppose them existing in its absence. . . .

14. . . . It is not possible for anything which in any way subsists outside the Real to be altogether without part therein: for it is the character of a real thing to create real things. On the other hand, the absolutely unreal can have no admixture of Reality. Hence the paradox, that Matter participates, yet does not participate: that from the proximity (to speak figuratively) of Form it has received a something, notwithstanding

its own nature is such that nothing can, as it were, adhere to it. That which it might have received slips off from it, as from an alien substance. The reflection is like the echo flung back from smooth and even surfaces: because it does not remain there, for that very reason it appears to be there and to originate thence. . . .

XXVIII. THAT EVIL IS IDENTICAL WITH MATTER

*Plotinus Enn., I. viii. 3*

If the Real and the Beyond-Real are such as we have described them, Evil can be neither in the Real nor in the Beyond-Real: for these are good. It remains therefore that if it exist at all it must exist in the unreal, and be a sort of "Form" of unreality, inhering in things which have the unreal as a component or in some way communicate therein.

By this "unreal" we do not understand complete non-existence, but only something other than the Real; nor, again, has it merely the unreality of the motion and rest inherent in the Real: it is the unreal as being an image of the Real or something yet less real than an image. Either it is the sensible universe and the sum of sense-affections; or it is posterior to these and related to them as an accident; or it is their principle of origin; or it is one among the constituents which give this world its character.

It may be conceived as unmeasuredness in contrast with Measure, as the indeterminate over against a Term, as the unformed against that which creates Form or the eternally needy against the self-sufficing; as that which is for ever without definition, which is stable nowhere, passible to all things yet knowing no fulness, a poverty made absolute; and these characters not accidental to it, but constituting its "essence," so that whatever portion of it one sees, in that portion are all these properties. Other beings, if they participate it and are assimilated to it, become evil; but Evil is not their essence.

What then is the substance in which these characters are found, not as extraneous to it, but as identical with it? That evil should occur as an accident in the not-evil, implies some prior existence of the Evil-in-itself, even though this be not a real Essence. As there is an absolute Good distinct from good-as-accident, so there must be an absolute Evil, distinct from evil-as-accident.

Can there exist, then, an Unmeasuredness apart from an unmeasured object? But what is Measure, apart from a measured object? As Measure does truly exist apart from the measured, so Unmeasuredness apart from the unmeasured. If Unmeasuredness did not exist by itself, it must exist either in the unmeasured or in the measured: but to the already unmeasured it would be superfluous, and of the measured, in so far as measured, it cannot be a property.

There must be a something, therefore, indeterminate in its own nature, absolute in formlessness and in the other characters which we have cited as peculiar to Evil: things which approximate to this, do so—either because they embrace Evil as a constituent, or because they look towards Evil as their principle, or because they tend to create what is evil. In fine, our examination identifies primary Evil, the Evil-in-itself, with that which is the substrate of Figure and Form and Shape, the substrate of Measure and Term; which by an alien ordering becomes a world-order, notwithstanding in itself it possesses nothing good; whose existence is phantasmal in relation to the Reals, yet it makes the essence of Evil, if it be possible that Evil should have any real Essence.<sup>1</sup>

#### XXIX. HOW MATTER IS KNOWABLE

*Plotinus Enn.*, I. viii. 9

When we see as it were an uncomely countenance

<sup>1</sup> For the views of Proclus, who does not accept the identification of Matter with Evil, see I.

impressed upon Matter, that is because the formative principle has not obtained sufficient mastery of its material to cover up Matter's ugliness: the object appears to us ugly in so far as it falls short of the Form. But how may we represent to ourselves that which is not in any degree possessed of Form?

When we make complete abstraction of Form, we give the name of Matter to any residuum. That is, in order to contemplate Matter it was necessary to admit formlessness into ourselves by abstracting all Form. Hence, in adventuring upon the vision of the non-intelligible, intelligence departs from its true character and becomes alien, like an eye which should cut itself off from light that, ceasing to see, it may see darkness. Withdrawal from the light which rendered the darkness invisible should have enabled it to see darkness; yet what the loss of light makes possible is not vision but failure of vision; there is no nearer approach to a vision of darkness. Similarly, if intelligence would behold its contrary, it must abandon its proper light within and, as it were, go out from itself; entering into the alien without introducing its own light, it must submit itself to the contrary of its true being.<sup>1</sup>

### XXX. OF THE INTELLIGIBLE MATTER

*Plotinus Enn., II. iv. 4, 5*

4. . . . If the Forms are many, there must be in them some common element, beside the proper characters whereby they differ one from another. The proper character or individual difference which makes them distinct is Shape.<sup>2</sup> But where there is Shape there is also a thing shapen, a subject in which the difference inheres. There must exist, then, a Matter receptive of their Shapes, a substrate always. Moreover, if there is an intelligible universe Yonder, whereof ours

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 52 B; also Aristot. *de Anima* 430b 21-4, *Met.* 1036a 8.

<sup>2</sup> Not, of course, sensible shape, which implies extension.

is a similitude, and ours is a composite containing Matter, then Yonder also Matter must exist. . . .

5. . . . Yet darkness is one thing in the sensible world, another in the intelligible; and the two kinds of Matter differ no less than the Forms which they sustain. The divine Matter receives a determining Form, and itself enjoys a determinate and intellective life. • The terrestrial becomes some determinate thing, yet it attains to no life or thought; it is a corpse apparelled. Here even the shape is a phantasm: wherefore the substrate is phantasmal also. But Yonder, because the shape is true Shape, the substrate likewise is true. Thus, were the intelligible Matter intended, we should agree with those who say Matter is Reality. For Yonder the substrate is Reality; or rather, since we must think of it as making a whole with the Form which it sustains, it is Reality illuminated.<sup>1</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle had already applied the distinction of Form and Matter to a great variety of non-sensible objects, *e. g.* to the relation of differentia to genus, and of Active to Passive Intelligence. But in his *actus purus* there is no element even of "intelligible" Matter: it is an abstraction left standing in an unresolved dualism over against his abstract primary Matter. For Neoplatonism the Intelligible World, which is also the Intelligence or *actus purus*, is a concrete articulated system and is therefore said to contain both "Form" and "Matter"; while the opposition of these two elements is overcome in the One. [Already in Plato the Forms contain both "Limit" and "the Unlimited," an element of identity and an element of difference (*Phil.* 16 C ff.; *Soph.* 256 E). Aristotle sometimes speaks of "the Unlimited" as the "Matter" of Plato's Forms (*e. g.* *Metaph.* 988a 12).]



## VI THE HUMAN SOUL

### XXXI. THAT THE SOUL IS NEITHER A MATERIAL THING NOR A PARTICULAR STATE OF MATTER

*Plotinus Enn., IV. vii. 2-4*

2. . . . WHAT can be the body which has life as a property? Fire and air, water and earth, are in themselves lifeless, albeit by the presence of a soul they can enjoy a borrowed life. But beside these four there are no other bodies; and in any case those who affirm elements other than the four have described them as bodies without souls and without life. If, however, none of the elements has life, it is strange that by their meeting life should arise: strange, nay impossible, that the mere collocation of bodies should make vitality and witless things generate intelligence.<sup>1</sup> . . .

3. If any one maintain that, on the contrary, atoms or indivisible particles produce a soul by their coming together,<sup>2</sup> he may be refuted from the community of consciousness, and on the ground that his juxtaposition is not an interpenetration; for a unit, and a unit of consciousness, cannot be constructed from bodies which are without consciousness and incapable of making a unity; and a soul is a unit of consciousness. From atoms not even a body could be constructed, nor indeed any extended magnitude. . . .

If, again, they maintain that the soul is an affection of

<sup>1</sup> Epiphenomenalism is inconsistent with the Neoplatonic theory of causation as the dependence of the less perfect upon the more perfect.

<sup>2</sup> The Epicurean view: cf. *Lucret.* III. 177 ff.

Matter, not an essence, they must declare whence this affection, which is life, came into Matter. It cannot be that Matter shapes itself and endows itself with a soul : there must exist something which bestows life, and since such bestowal belongs neither to Matter nor to any body, this something must lie outside and beyond all corporeal nature. For without the soul's power not even bodies would exist. Body is in flux, and its proper character is mutability : were all things corporeal, even though we should give to some one body the name of soul, it would perish speedily ; for being formed of one Matter with other bodies it would share their dissolution. In strictness, indeed, this "soul" would never have arisen : if there be nothing to shape Matter, nothing will emerge from it. It may well be that not even Matter itself would have existed. . . .

4. Our adversaries themselves,<sup>1</sup> constrained by the truth, bear witness that there must exist something prior and superior to bodies, namely, souls as a separate kind, when they define the soul as a *conscious* breath or as *intellective* fire. As though without fire and breath there were no place in the world for the higher Principle, but it must seek a spatial habitation ! It were better to ask, "Where is the body's dwelling ?" ; for Body can dwell only in the powers of Soul.<sup>2</sup> If they lay down that the life and the soul is nothing but the breath, what means that famous qualification of theirs, "in a certain habitude," wherein they take refuge when compelled to posit an efficient Principle other than Body ? If they say that not all breath is a soul (since there exist innumerable lifeless breaths),<sup>3</sup> but only breath in a certain habitude, they must confess that this "habitue" is either something real or nothing. If it is nothing, it is but

<sup>1</sup> The Stoics : see Zeller, *Stoics, etc.* (Eng. trans.), p. 211, n. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 36 D.

<sup>3</sup> Pneuma, which I translate throughout "breath," means also "wind." For Greek philosophy it is always a material principle : its use as a name for the higher part of the soul (whence the modern usage of "spirit" as opposed to "matter") is Gnostic and Pauline.

a name, and the soul is breath simply. And thus they will arrive at the denial of all reality save Matter; Soul and God and all things will be names, and Matter alone real. But if the habitude is something real, distinct from its subject and from Matter, existing indeed in Matter, yet itself immaterial as not being in turn composite of Matter, this habitude must be a kind of rational principle, and of another nature than Body. . . .

XXXII. THAT NO PART OF THE SOUL IS INSEPARABLE FROM THE BODY

*Plotinus Enn.*, IV. vii. 13 (8)

In what sense the term "entelechy" is applicable to the soul, may be examined as follows. They<sup>1</sup> say that in the whole composite the soul is related to the animate body as Form to Matter; that it is not the Form of all bodies, nor of Body as such, but the Form of a natural organic body potentially possessed of life.<sup>2</sup> Now if the soul is so associated with the body that it is assimilated to the body as the shape of a statue is assimilated to the bronze, it follows that upon the body's dissolution the soul is parcelled out; that a severed member carries a portion of the soul with it; that there is no withdrawal in sleep (since no entelechy is capable of being detached from the object whose entelechy it is); and indeed that sleep will never occur. Further, if the soul is an entelechy there can be no opposition of reason and the desires; the whole must have one selfsame feeling throughout, with no inward disharmony.<sup>3</sup>

At the most, such a soul might exercise sense-perception intellection it cannot. It is for this reason our adversaries themselves introduce a second soul, the intelligence, which

<sup>1</sup> The Peripatetics.

<sup>2</sup> *Aristot. de An.* 412a 27.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plato's argument against the view that the soul is an "attunement of the body," *Phaedo* 94 B-E.

they make immortal.<sup>1</sup> If the rational soul, then, is to be styled an entelechy, it cannot be in the aforesaid meaning of the term. Again, the sensitive soul, inasmuch as it preserves the impresses of sensible objects which are absent, must preserve them incorporeally; for otherwise they must be contained in it as shapes and images, and containing them so it could not have space for fresh impresses. Accordingly the sensitive soul is not an inseparable entelechy. Nor is the desirous nature such an entelechy: for it desires not meat and drink merely, but other things beside the body's needs. There remains, then, the vegetative function: which might seem to afford matter of debate, whether it be not an inseparable entelechy in the meaning intended.

• It would appear, however, that not even this degree of soul is inseparable. For in every plant the source of life is at the root, and when, as happens in many plants, the rest of the body withers<sup>2</sup> about the root and lower parts, it is evident the soul has gathered itself into one region, deserting the rest: but if this is so, the soul cannot have been in the entire plant as an inseparable entelechy. Moreover, the plant before it is grown is contained in little bulk. If the soul may pass into a little plant from a greater, and again expand from a little over the whole, what hinders it to be wholly separated? . . .

XXXIII. OF THE SOUL OR MAN AND THE COMPOSITE  
OR ANIMAL NATURE

*Plotinus Enn., I. i. 7*

The composite can subsist only in virtue of the soul's presence. Yet the soul, if she is as we have described her, cannot give *herself* to the composite or to the other element therein; but out of a body such as we have described and a something issuing from herself like light, she creates a third

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Aristot. *de An.* III. v.; *de Gen. Animal.* 736b 28. Plotinus' doctrine is directed to removing the unexplained duality thus introduced. See xxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> ἀναισθημένον.

thing, the animal nature, wherein are vested sense-perception and the remainder of the above-mentioned passive affections of the animal.<sup>1</sup>

How, then, is it said that *we* perceive? Doubtless in that we are not wholly disentangled from this animal, notwithstanding other faculties of greater worth go to make the entirety of our manifold being as men. That power of perception which belongs to the soul<sup>2</sup> must be concerned with the apprehension not of sensibles but rather of the imprints left by sense-perception upon the animal nature; these latter attain the rank of intelligibles. Outward perception, then, is but a phantom of this function which has truer Being and lies in the impassive contemplation of Forms only. From this point upward the soul has entire conduct of the animal; from these Forms spring our discursive thinking, our "opinions" and our acts of intellection, and here is our proper self. What comes below this level does indeed pertain to us; but our veritable self, which is set in authority over the animal, extends from here upward. Or, if we will, nothing hinders our naming the whole being "the animal," the lower parts being then a complex creature, the higher the true Man, or nearly so. The lower functions will thus be the "lion-nature" and the "beast of many kinds."<sup>3</sup> The true Man is coincident with the rational soul; and when we reason, it is ourself that reasons, in that reasoning is the active operation of a soul.

#### XXXIV. CONCERNING THE DESCENT OF THE SOUL

*Plotinus Enn., v. i. 1*

What is it that has caused our souls to forget God, who is

<sup>1</sup> Those desires and emotions which are associated with the body's wants, such as hunger and physical pain.

<sup>2</sup> Plotinus seems to be drawing something like the modern distinction between perception and sensation; but the Greek vocabulary has no terms to express this distinction.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 588 C ff. The "lion-nature" (Will to Power) and the "beast of many kinds" (Will to Pleasure) both belong in Plotinus' psychology to the composite, not to the true soul or Man.

their father, and no more to know either themselves or him, even whilst they are members of him and altogether his?

Their evil state had its beginning from frowardness,<sup>1</sup> from entry into birth, from the primal otherness, from the will to be their own and not his. So soon as they had clearly known the pleasure of free choice, making large use of their capacity for self-movement they hastened by the road that leads outward; and when they had carried the defection to its utmost they lost knowledge even of their origin from God. It is with them as with children: a child ravished at birth, from its father, and reared a long time in a distant place, knows not what itself is nor what its father is; and so our souls, seeing no longer either God or themselves, thought meanly of themselves through ignorance of their kinship and set store by other things. Their wonder, their reverence, their love was sooner given to anything than to themselves: dependent on the world they knew, so far as they had power<sup>2</sup> they broke free from that Other which they rejected and misprized.

So it is that the cause of our utter ignorance of God lies in the price we put upon sensible things, the small account we make of ourselves. For that which follows after the alien and admires it confesses in this act its own inferiority; and one who puts himself lower than things that grow and pass away, esteeming himself meanest and most transitory of all that he honours, can never embrace in the compass of his spirit the nature or the power of God. . . .

#### XXXV. THE SAME

*Plotinus Enn., IV. viii. 7*

Since there exists a two-fold nature, intelligible and sensible,

<sup>1</sup> Tolma, a Pythagorean term for the instinct of self-affirmation or misus towards individuality which gives rise to a complex universe: cf. *Theol. Arithm.* ii. pp. 7 and 9 (ed. de Falco); *Plut. de Is.* 381 F; and *Proclus in Alcib. I.* § 46; also *Enn.* II. ix. 11.

<sup>2</sup> In Plotinus' view the soul never completely loses its connection with God.

it is indeed better for the soul to dwell in the Intelligible, but being what she is she must needs participate the Sensible also; and she has no occasion to be vexed with herself if she is not everywhere her noblest self, seeing that in the universe she fills an intermediate station. She is of the divine estate, but her dwelling is upon the last confines of the Intelligible, so that she has the Sensible for neighbour and gives to it a part of what is hers. From that Sensible she must in turn receive, if in guiding it she stay not by the unfaltering part of herself,<sup>1</sup> but through overmuch zeal sink into the depths of Matter,<sup>2</sup> no longer resting in entireness with the all-Soul. Thereat she may grieve the less since she has power to emerge again with the added knowledge of all that in this world she has seen and suffered, having learned what it is to dwell in the Divine and gained clearer understanding of the better condition by contrast with its seeming<sup>3</sup> opposite. For the experience of Evil carries plainer recognition of Good, to those whose force is too weak to recognise Evil by theoretic knowledge before experience. . . .

XXXVI. THE SAME<sup>4</sup>

*Plotinus Enn.*, I. viii. 14

. . . Matter is an existing thing. Soul is an existing thing. They occupy as it were one place. There is no place of Matter distinct from the place of Soul; thus, Matter is not confined to earth and Soul to air. Yet Soul has its place apart in this sense, that it is not *in* Matter; that is, it is not

<sup>1</sup> For the doctrine of an "unfaltering part" see xxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Enn.* IV. iii. 17, where the soul is beautifully compared to a helmsman who risks his own safety in trying to save his ship. The suggestion of a redemptive purpose in the descent of the souls occurs also in Proclus, *in Tim.* 338 D, 339 A.

<sup>3</sup> The sensible universe is nowhere in Plotinus strictly the "opposite" of the intelligible; the Real can have no real opposite; but the two may be contrasted as imperfect with perfect, conditioned with unconditional.

<sup>4</sup> This passage seems to apply both to the generation of Nature from the Divine Soul and to the generation of the animal nature of man from the particular soul.

united to Matter; that is, no unity is produced out of Soul and Matter; that is, Soul does not arise in Matter as in a subject. This is the Soul's apartness.

But the powers of Soul are many: she has her source, her middle tracts, her outermost borders. Matter is there and asks an alms of her:<sup>1</sup> pesters her, as it were, and would intrude upon her inner being. But all the region is holy, and there is nothing not ensouled. And so Matter, submitting herself to Soul, receives illumination; but the illuminant she cannot receive. For it does not suffer her, notwithstanding she is close by; since her evil condition renders her invisible.<sup>2</sup> Even the illumination cast upon her, the light from the higher Principle, she has made dark and weak by alloy, lending to it her own generated existence and furnishing the cause of its entry into her (for it could not have entered, were she not at hand to receive it).

This entry into Matter is the Fall of the Soul; this, and the weakness which ensues because Matter, invading the Soul's domain, and as it were forcing her to narrower bounds, does not permit all her powers to be actualised, but filches away a part and makes it evil, until it have strength again to escape upwards. Matter is thus the cause both of the soul's weakness and of her vice. . . .

XXXVII. THAT THE DESCENT OF THE SOULS IS NEITHER BY  
DELIBERATE CHOICE NOR BY EXTERNAL COMPULSION

*Plotinus Enn., IV. iii. 13*

The souls came hither not by sending, and not of their own will; or at least their will is no deliberate choice, but a prompting of nature, as leaping is, or as men are moved to the natural impulses of wedlock and some men to noble deeds, not by calculation. Yet for such an one is such a fate destined

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Symp.* 203 B. Pénia (Poverty) in the Platonic myth was identified by the Neoplatonists with Matter.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. xxix. "The illuminant" is the unfallen soul.



from eternity; and to such an one it must befall now, to another hereafter. The Intelligence which is before the world contains the destiny of our abiding Yonder no less than of our sending forth; the individual is "sent" forth as falling under the general ordinance. For the universal is implicit in each, and not by authority from without does the ordinance enforce itself; it is inherent in those who shall obey it and they carry it always within them. And when their season is come, that which it wills is brought to pass by those in whom it resides; bearing it within them, they fulfil it of their own accord; the ordinance prevails because the ordinance has its seat in them, as it were pressing upon them weightily, awakening in them an impulse, a yearning, to go to that place whither the indwelling voice seems to bid them go.

XXXVIII. THAT EVERY SOUL CONTAINS WITHIN ITSELF THE THREE SUPREME PRINCIPLES, AND THAT THESE DO NOT DESCEND INTO MATTER

*Plotinus Enn., v. i. 10-12*

10. We have already shown cause to think that there exists a Principle prior to Being, the One, whose nature our reasoning sought to exhibit, in so far as these matters admit of proof; that the series is continued in Being and Intelligence; and that its third member is Soul.

Now as the aforesaid three Principles exist in nature, so we must believe them to exist in ourselves; not indeed in the self of sense (for the Supreme Principles are disjoined from Matter), but in the self external to sense—"external," as the divine Principles are external to the universal firmament, so correspondingly in Man (and thus Plato speaks of "the inner Man").<sup>1</sup> Our soul, then, like all Soul, is a divine thing and of another nature than Matter. And the perfect soul is that which has intelligence. . . .

11. . . . Since there exists a reasoning soul who applies

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* 589 A.

herself to questions respecting justice and beauty, and examines by ratiocination whether a particular object is just or beautiful, there must be some stable principle of justice whence ratiocination arises in the soul; else how should we reason? And if at one time our soul reasons of these matters, at another not, we must have within us the Intelligence which does not reason but eternally *possesses* Justice,<sup>1</sup> and likewise the source and ground of the Intelligence, which is God. Yet the Divine is not parcelled amongst us. It keeps its own station; but because its station is not a point of space it may, again, be considered as existing in duplicate at many points of space, in every one that is able to receive it. In like manner the centre of a circle is self-dependent, but each thing in the circle has its corresponding point in the centre, to which the radii carry back its individual nature. So among our powers is one whereby we lay hold on the Divine and are conjoined with it and dependent from it; but they only are steadfastly grounded therein whose life converges thither.

12. How comes it, then, if we possess these mighty Principles, that we do not apprehend them? Wherefore do we so seldom—and some of us indeed never—use them actively? Nay, the divine Principles continue everlastingly in full actuality, Intellect and its prior everlastingly self-contained; and in like manner Soul has her everlasting movement. For the content of our souls is not all perceptible to sense, but reaches us only in so far as it enters into perception; so long as the activity of any several part fails to communicate itself to the perceiving faculty, it cannot penetrate the entire soul. Thus far, accordingly, *we* have no knowledge of it, since we are associated with a perceptive function, and our identity lies not in a fraction of our soul but in the whole. In truth every part of soul, since it is continually alive, is in itself continually actualised in its proper activity, but there is no awareness of it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *de Anima* III. 5.

unless there be communication and apprehension.<sup>1</sup> For the apprehension of activities which are in this sense present to us, we must direct the apprehensive faculty towards the innermost self, and there cause it to attend. As one expecting to hear a hoped-for voice withholds himself from all other voices and sharpens his hearing to catch the sweeter note when it shall come, so here a man must not admit any sensible audition beside what is needful; he must preserve unsullied the soul's power of apprehension, ready to give ear to the sounds of the upper world.

XXXIX. IAMBlichUS AND PROCLUS DISSENT FROM THIS  
DOCTRINE

*Proclus, in Tim., 341 D*

. . . We shall take liberty to differ from Plotinus and the great Theodore,<sup>2</sup> who would preserve in us a something impassive which perpetually intuits. . . . The divine Iamblichus is right in his contention against the upholders of this opinion. For what is it that sins in us when upon the impulse of unreason we pursue our unbridled phantasy? Is it not the will? Surely: since by the possession of will we are distinguished from those creatures which have no check on their phantasy. But if the will sins, how should the soul be without sin?

Again, what is the condition required to make our whole life happy? Surely we reply: "That our reason should achieve its proper excellence." If, then, by the perfection of the noblest part the whole self is made happy, how comes it that every man of us is not at this present time happy—if it be true that the summit of our being enjoys perpetual intuition and is eternally intent upon divine things? . . .

<sup>1</sup> That there is both subconscious and superconscious mental activity is explicitly laid down in *Enn.* IV. vii. 8. Elsewhere Plotinus has the acute observation that self-consciousness is commonly not a help but a hindrance to activity; and that we are most intensely alive when least self-conscious (*Enn.* I. iv. 10).

<sup>2</sup> Theodore of Asine, a Neoplatonist of the fourth century, frequently cited by Proclus.

XL. OF SYMPATHY; AND IN WHAT SENSE ALL SOULS  
ARE ONE

*Plotinus Enn., IV. ix. 2-5*

2. . . . We do not attribute to the all-Soul a unity altogether excluding plurality; such unity must be reserved to a higher Principle. We hold that Soul is one and many, participating at once the Principle which is made divisible in bodies, and the indivisible Principle, in virtue of which she is again one.<sup>1</sup>

Now in the individual person the affection of a part does not of necessity master the whole, but whatsoever affects the ruling function has some action upon the part. The like is true of the universal Soul: the influences issuing from the universe to play upon each of us are relatively discernible, because at many points we share in the affections of the Whole; but whether our influence is in turn contributory to the Whole, we cannot determine.

3. Yet on the other part reflection certifies us that there is community of feeling between man and man; that we grieve at the mere sight of grief, that we can be melted from our separate moulds, that we are by nature impelled to friendship (and is not friendship the product of sympathy?). And if incantations and other magical practices can draw souls together, and set up community of feeling at a distance, they are surely mediated by a general Soul. And again, a word softly pronounced has been known to influence a distant object, and to secure obedience across vast intervals of space: from which we may conclude to a unity of all things, determined by the unity of Soul.<sup>2</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Tim.* 35 A. Soul is thus the link between the intelligible universe and the sensible: cf. xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> On "sympathy" see further lxi. Plotinus' theory of telepathy, which correlates it with prayer and with what would now be called "suggestion" (all three being in his view mediated by the world-Soul), has been revived in modern times by William James.

4. The purpose of the foregoing is to justify the reference of all souls to a unity. Reflection, however, enquires how we intend this unity: does it lie in the derivation of all from one? or is the sum of souls identical with the one Soul? And if all derive from one, is this one divided? or does it rest entire, notwithstanding it creates from itself the many? And how may a substance rest entire, yet create many substances out of itself?

Let us affirm—first inviting God to be our helper—there must be one Soul before there can be many, and that the many owe their being to the one.<sup>1</sup> Now, if the Soul were a body, the many souls must be produced by division of this body, so that each would become an altogether separate existence. And if further the Soul were a homogeneous body, all must be of one kind, carrying the same single Form in its entirety, but differing by their extended magnitude. Thus if their character as souls were determined by the room they occupied, they would be distinct one from another; but if by the Form, all souls would be formally one. Which is as much as to say, that one and the same Soul would be found in many bodies. . . . Again, if Soul were an affection of Body, it would be nothing wonderful that one quality proceeding from some single origin should exist in many bodies. Nor, again, would there be any matter of wonder if the soul were determined by the composite.

But we account Soul to be incorporeal and substantial.

5. How then does one substance exist in many souls? Either the one must be entire in each of them, or the many are derived from the one entire Soul without its dissipation. Upon either view, that Soul remains one; and the many are to be referred to it as to a unity which gives itself to multiplicity and yet preserves itself. For it is able to bestow itself

<sup>1</sup> By the general principle that multiplicity implies unity, but not vice versa: cf. i, xvii. The appeal to God marks the fundamental nature of the difficulty cf. *Enn.* V. i. 6, and Plato, *Tim.* 48 D.

upon all even while it remains one: it penetrates all things at once, and from none is it wholly dissevered. The same substance is thus present in a multitude of beings. Let not this be met with incredulity: for the whole of science and its several parts exist in such a fashion that by the derivation of the parts from it the whole is unimpaired; and the seed is the whole plant, even while the several parts proceed from it according to the law of its growth; each part is the whole, and the whole rests whole and undiminished (notwithstanding Matter has partitioned it), and all the parts are one. . . .

#### XXI. THAT OUR INDIVIDUALITY ENDURES

*Plotinus Enn., iv. iii. 5*

Yet we ask, again, in what manner is one soul thine, a second this man's, another another's? Does the soul pertain at its lower extremity to the individual, but in its higher segment to the Divine and not to the man? No: for it ensues from this that Socrates will exist only when the soul of Socrates is in his body, but will perish at the very season when his soul is in the Supreme. Surely nothing that is Real will perish. In the world Yonder the several intelligences will never be lost in unity for all that they are not divided corporeally; each endures, preserving its proper being in individual difference. So it is with the next order, the souls, which, dependent from the several intelligences, are their uttered thoughts, more fully explicated than they—a greater bulk, as it were, grown out of the smaller.<sup>1</sup> While by that small portion of her nature which is less divisible than the rest each soul remains attached to an intelligence, nevertheless hence onward she consents to be divided; yet failing to attain complete division, they preserve at once sameness and difference; each remains one, and all are one together. . . .

<sup>1</sup> As the Soul is the expansion or unfolding of the Intelligence (cf. x), so the series of souls expresses or unfolds a corresponding series of intelligences: cf. xxiv *ipit.*

XLII. CONCERNING THE RELEASE OF THE SOUL  
FROM THE BODY

*Porphyry, Sent., 7-9*

7. The soul is bound to the body in so far as she is directed towards the feelings which proceed from the body. She is loosed therefrom in so far as she is impassible to corporeal promptings.

8. What Nature has bound, Nature looses. What the soul has bound, the soul looses. It was Nature that bound body in soul; but the soul bound herself in body. Accordingly it is Nature that looses body from soul; but soul is loosed from body by soul herself.

9. There are thus two kinds of death: that known to all, when the body is loosed from the soul; that known to philosophers, when the soul is loosed from the body. And the one death does not always accompany the other.<sup>1</sup>

XLIII. DESTINY OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

*Plotinus Enn., IV. iii. 24*

Where will the soul be when she has quitted the body? Not here, where she has no longer any possible lodging; she cannot rest attached to a body which is not in a state to entertain her, unless she have some infection from that body, to draw bodywards the foolish soul. If she have any alien element, her being is in the alien, and she goes with it to its own place.

But in each place there is variety of quarters; and the difference must proceed both from the condition of each soul and from the judgment dwelling in the world. Never and never shall any man escape the meet reward of his wrongdoing; from the divine ordinance there is no refuge, for whilst it contains within itself the execution of the sentence already passed, at the same time the culprit of his own motion is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 64 A ff.

carried unwittingly towards his suffering; though he oscillate back and forth through the universe in restless movement, yet at last, as it were outwearied by his struggles, he sinks into the place proper to him, carried thither by his own will, albeit he wills not to suffer. Likewise it is set down in the ordinance how much he shall suffer, and for what season; and in like manner, by virtue of the harmony pervading all things, there is correspondence between the relaxing of the punishment and the recovery of his power to escape upwards out of those regions.<sup>1</sup>

Keeping a body, such souls remain sensible of bodily punishments. But the souls which are pure of alloy and draw to them no least portion of body must needs cease to be the souls of bodies. Losing their bodies, they lose their existence in Body; but where Essence is, and the Real, and God's nature in God, there shall the purified soul be, with these and in God. If still thou askest where the soul is, ask where these things are; but seek them not with the eyes, nor as bodies are sought.

#### XLIV. THE SAME: SPIRITUAL DEATH

*Plotinus Enn., I. viii. 13*

. . . By sinking down in Matter and glutting herself with it, the soul can die while yet plunged in the body; likewise when she has quitted the body her death is to lie in Matter until such time as she can escape upwards and by some means lift her face from the mud.<sup>2</sup> This is "the descent to Hades and the after-sleep."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. xxxvii. The reversion, like the descent, is determined; but determined by an inner not an outward necessity. All the Neoplatonists repudiate the notion of eternal punishment.

<sup>2</sup> "To lie in the mud" was an Orphic purgatory (Plato, *Rep.* 363 D, cf. Burnet on *Phaedo* 69 C). The quotation in the next sentence is from *Rep.* 524 D.



## XLV. THE SAME: REINCARNATION

*Plotinus Enn., III. iv. 2*

. . . Upon quitting the body, the soul is identified with that part of her which in her bodily lifetime most prevailed. Wherefore we must turn for refuge towards the Supernal: that we may not through following of sensible phantoms lapse to the merely sensitive degree of soul, nor to the merely vegetative by pursuing carnal appetite and by daintiness in victuals, but may enter into the intellective Principle and into the Intelligence and into God. As many of us as have maintained our humanity, are born as men again; but those who have lived by sense alone are born as beasts.<sup>1</sup> . . .

## XLVI. THE SAME: LIFE OF THE BLESSED SOULS

*Plotinus Enn., IV. iii. 18*

Does the soul use ratiocination before her coming hither and again after her withdrawal? We reply that ratiocination is a product of her earthly life: it does not arise until she is at a loss and filled with doubt, that is, until her force is weakened; for the need of it is a defect in the sufficiency of the intelligence. This is true also in the arts: the artist reasons only when he is at a loss; when all goes smoothly his art is controlling him and doing his work.<sup>2</sup>

But if Yonder our souls cease to reason, do not they cease to be rational? It might be answered that they have still the *potentiality* of resolving difficulties, should they arise, by examination.<sup>3</sup> And further, we must here understand ratiocination only of *discursive* reasoning: if it be intended

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion that human souls may be reincarnated in beasts comes from Plato (*Phaedo* 81 D ff.; *Tim.* 42 B-D, etc.), but was rejected by Porphyry (cf. *Aug. de Civ. Dei* x. 30), Iamblichus (cf. *Nemesius de Nat. Hom.* 2) and Proclus (*in Tim.* V. 329). How far Plotinus accepted it seriously it is not easy to decide: most of his teaching about reincarnation seems to belong to the same ambiguous domain as the Platonic myths.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *lv.*

<sup>3</sup> *ὅταν περίστασις, εὐπορήσῃ διασκοπούσαι.*

as the character eternally generated by the Intelligence and existing in the souls, the stable actualisation and as it were revelation of the Intelligence, then even Yonder they use reasoning.

Again, it is to be presumed they do not use speech when their being is wholly in the Intelligible and their bodies in the firmament.<sup>1</sup> Such converse as their needs or uncertainties compel them to use here, can have no place Yonder; and since they do all things orderly and by the prompting of nature, there can be no communication of commands or counsels; but doubtless they have awareness by intuition of one another's thoughts. Even here we receive many messages by the eyes, without utterance: but Yonder our whole body is pure, and each of us is like an eye;<sup>2</sup> there is nothing hidden, nothing feigned, but one looks and knows another's thought before it be told. That daemons, however, and souls in the air should use speech is nothing singular: for they are animal things.

#### XLVII. A LATER NEOPLATONIST ON THE SAME

*Sallustius de Diis et Mundo*, 20, 21

20. If the soul is reincarnated as a rational creature, it becomes the actual soul of a body; if as an irrational creature, it accompanies the body but remains outside it, as the daemons allotted to us accompany us;<sup>3</sup> for never and never shall a rational soul become the soul of a brute.

That there is reincarnation may be plainly seen by the blemishes men have from their birth. Why else are some born blind, and others paralytic, and others diseased in the

<sup>1</sup> The noblest souls rule the stars, which are the noblest part of the sensible universe; but like the world-Soul (vi) they rule without falling under the limiting and darkening influence of Matter.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 107 D; *Tim.* 90 A; *Rep.* 620 D; Plot., *Enn.* III. iv. (where, as here, the daemon is the degree of soul immediately above that realised in the conscious life).

soul itself?<sup>1</sup> Again, when it is a natural property of souls to reside in bodies, is it fitting that after they have once withdrawn they should continue in idleness through all eternity?<sup>2</sup> If souls do not pass a second time into bodies, either they must be infinite in number, or else God continually creates fresh souls. But in the universe is nothing infinite: for no infinity can exist within the finite. Neither is it possible that fresh souls should arise: for that in which a new thing arises must needs be imperfect; but perfection is proper to the universe, since it is the child of the Perfect.

21. Those souls which have lived virtuously are blessed. Dissevered from the irrational part, and made clean of all body, they are joined with the gods and share with them the governance of all the world.<sup>3</sup> Yet though none of these things were given to them, nevertheless virtue itself and the pleasure and glory of virtue, a life beyond pain and without master, would have sufficed to make them happy who had the will and the strength to live by the rule of virtue.

<sup>1</sup> Such congenital ills are to be explained as penalties for past misdeeds: cf. Plot., *Enn.* III. ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> This is perhaps a hit at popular Christian theology, which is attacked elsewhere in this treatise. Proclus (*Inst. Theol.* 206) holds that the series of reincarnations is endless; and Plotinus seems to lean towards this opinion, though his statements on the point are vague and somewhat inconsistent. According to Augustine (*Civ. Dei* x. 30) the doctrine of the soul's final release from Matter was an innovation due to Porphyry: we have here perhaps a genuine trace of Oriental influence on Neoplatonism.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 114; *Phaedrus* 246 B.

## VII

### GOOD AND EVIL

#### XLVIII. OF THE NECESSITY OF EVIL

*Plotinus Enn.*, I. viii. 7, 15

7. How does it necessarily follow, that if there is Good there is also Evil?<sup>1</sup> May it not be because Matter is required as an element in our universe, which is of necessity compounded from contraries, and indeed could not exist if Matter did not? The world-order we know is thus "composite of Intelligence and Necessity":<sup>2</sup> all that comes into it from God is good; evil things derive from the old nature. . . .

The necessity of Evil may also be conceived in this way.<sup>3</sup> Since the Good is not the sole existing thing, the outgoing, or, if anyone likes that language better, the continual down-going and defection from it, must have attained a limit beyond which it was not possible for any further thing to be generated: this limit must be the principle of Evil. The necessity of procession from the First carries with it the necessity of a Last, that is, of Matter, in which the presence of the Good fails; and this is the necessity of Evil.

15. . . . He who should maintain that Evil is altogether non-existent, must at the same stroke abolish the Good, and indeed every object of appetite.<sup>4</sup> Appetition itself disappears accordingly, and with it aversion and thought: for all appetition is of some good, all aversion from some evil; and thought

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Theæt.* 176 A. For the answer given here, cf. *Tim.* chap. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Tim.* 47 E: cf. *Polit.* 273.

<sup>3</sup> What follows is Plotinus' own theory, designed to avoid the appearance of dualism involved in the language of the *Timæus*.

<sup>4</sup> The doctrine that good and evil imply each other goes back as far as Heraclitus: see Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 166 (3rd edition).

## GOOD AND EVIL

or wisdom has good and evil as objects, besides being itself a good. There must exist, therefore, a Good and a Good-without-alloy; then that which is part good, part evil; then that in which Evil predominates. This last is already within the sphere of Evil-absolute, as that in which Evil has the lesser part is in the measure of that lessening subordinate to the Good. . . .

By the power of Good, because Good is what it is, Evil is not Evil alone, but was from its first appearing necessarily embraced in certain bonds of loveliness, as a prisoner in golden fetters, wherein it lies hidden, that to the gods it might be wholly invisible, and that there might be a way for men not eternally to gaze on Evil, but even in that gazing to dwell with beauty's phantoms, that they may remember Beauty.

### XLIX. THE SAME

*Plotinus Enn.*, III. ii. 14, 15

14. . . . It was impossible but creative Reason should extend itself to all things:<sup>1</sup> within the greater must be the less, within the whole the parts, which would not be parts, were they equal to the Whole. In the Supernal, indeed, each thing is all;<sup>2</sup> but in this lower universe it is not so. Thus the particular man, in so far as he is a part, cannot be All (though if in certain of the parts there exists a somewhat, which is not fractional, the part is thereby one with the Whole). Accordingly we must not require of the individual, in so far as he is individual, that he shall attain the full stature of perfection; for in such attainment he would be no longer a particular.

Yet we do not intend that the Whole begrudges increase of value to the part, which by its own gain brings new beauty to the Sum. Through assimilation to the Whole, by privilege, as it were, and especial design, the part is made worthy;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. iv and viii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. xiii.

that as the constellations enlighten the divine firmament, so for our human place a light may shine in Man; that even on earth there may be vision as of a great, fair statue, a statue ensouled, or else wrought to life by Hephaestus' craft, in whose brow are glimmering stars, and other stars in its bosom, and wheresoever they could be manifest, an ordinance of stars decreed.

So much for the imperfection of particular things considered severally. But what of the interplay of these individuals, which have been born in the past and still come to birth? Here is matter to give us pause and put us in doubt, when we reflect upon the internecine hunger of the brute creation, upon the mutual assaults of men, upon the unending war that knows no rest or stay; more especially if this condition has been determined by creative Reason and is declared to be good. Those who judge thus must have some other support than the thought that the world is as well as it can be, the necessary failure of perfection being a consequence from Matter; that Evil cannot perish, since it was so fated, and what is fated is well; that Matter is not an intruder holding the mastery, but a principle brought in to make this world, or rather, this existence of Matter is itself a consequence from Reason. On this showing, the Beginning is Reason, and all things are Reason, and by Reason is determined whatsoever is generated, and in generation each holds its appointed place. Where, then, is the necessity of the truceless war that is fought among beasts and among men?

We answer, that when beasts devour one another this is but the necessary transformation of creatures which, though they were left unharmed, yet could not endure for ever without change. If at the appointed season of their withdrawal, they must in withdrawing serve another's need, why should we grudge it? And what if the life devoured is transmuted to other life, like the dead man in the play, who is not truly

dead but comes in a second time in a new part when he has altered his disguise? If death is but a change of bodies, as the actor changes his robe, or else an intermittent release from the body, as the actor makes his last exit for that night yet will come again to play another time, what horror can be in such transfusion of creature into creature? It is far better so than if living things had never been: for thus there had been sterility of life and impossibility of its expression in an alien material; whereas now the strong Vitality which is in the All fashions all things, weaving its various patterns in their lives, and ceases not from endless creation of comely beasts good to look upon, its living toys.

What of the arming of man against man? Mortality warring in ordered regiments, as in the mimic wars of the sword dance, is surely an evidence that all the serious business of mankind is but play, and a sign that death is nothing to be feared, for those who die in wars and battles forestall but by a little the effect of age, departing the sooner, the sooner to return. Suppose, again, that in their lifetime they are plundered of their goods, thereby they may learn that these goods were never truly theirs; that likewise the plunderers' "possession" of them is laughable illusion, since others rob the robbers; and that indeed, though there be no robbery, the possession is worse than the deprivation. Murder and every kind of death, the fall of cities and their despoiling, we must view as things done upon a theatre-stage, where all is but a shifting of scene and costume, dirge and outcry enacted in counterfeit. Here too, in the several accidents of life, it is not Man's inward soul but his outward shadow which cries and bewails itself and acts out its part upon the stage of all the world, which oftentimes we mistake for actuality.<sup>1</sup> For this is the conduct of men who understand only the lower and the outer life, and have not learned that even in tears and earnest they are still at play.

<sup>1</sup> πολλαχού <οὐ> σκηνάς.

To take life in earnest is for the earnest only, whose concern is with things of earnest: the rest of our humanity<sup>1</sup> is a child's toy. Yet even toys are things of earnest with those who know not what earnest is, being toys themselves. That man who has taken a hand in their game and suffered their vicissitudes, must put off the toy which masks his true self, and know that he has but strayed into a play of children. \* If Socrates plays at all, the player must be the outward Socrates. And, lastly, we should reflect that tears and lamentations are not to be taken for evidence of the reality of evils, since children will cry and make a moan where nothing is amiss.<sup>2</sup>

#### L. THE SAME: OPINION OF PROCLUS

*Proclus, in Remp., 358*

. . . As to the origin of Evil, we are presented with an antinomy. If Evil be directly from God, then the argument must fall by which it is shown that the Divine is author only of things good.<sup>3</sup> And if it be from another source, which source in turn derives from God, the divine responsibility is but the heavier. But if Evil be wholly independent of God, then there is plurality of First Principles, Good and Evil arising from two several sources. . . .

This topic has been treated at length elsewhere;<sup>4</sup> but a summary solution may be in place here. . . . Our answer is, that Evil is neither from God nor from any other single cause: in this sense, that no author wilfully brings it on the stage of existence. For we can neither introduce a Form of things evil.

<sup>1</sup> *I. e.* the "animal nature" (cf. xxxiii), with which the *homme moyen sensuel* identifies his personality because it occupies the foreground of his consciousness. The higher soul exists in all, but is commonly latent.

<sup>2</sup> This passage has sometimes been cited as evidence that Plotinus was influenced by Eastern thought. But its leading ideas and some of its most striking phrases are unmistakably derived from Plato, *Laws* 803-4. Cf. also the sayings of Heraclitus, that "Man is called a baby by God," and "Time is a child playing at draughts."

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 379 C

<sup>4</sup> The reference is to the monograph *de Malorum Subsistentia*.



nor yet consider Matter to be their cause. The Forms are all of them divine and intellective, and all of them preside over Essences or the perfections existing in Essences. And Matter too derives from God,<sup>1</sup> as being necessary to the universe. Since it is contributory to the generation of the Whole, it is not maleficent; although, as the limit of all existence, it cannot be a positive good. Like all that is a means and not an end, it is to be classed among things necessary.

Accordingly, we must not assign evils to any cause consisting either in Form or in Matter, nor indeed to any single principle of origin, but, with the Master,<sup>2</sup> represent them as a side-product of certain partial and dispersed causes: partial, as not being identical with any entire Principle, such as Intelligence or Soul or Body; and manifold, as making no unity. This is the Master's meaning when he bids us "seek elsewhere for the causes of Evil."<sup>3</sup> If a body is infected with Evil it doubtless embraces diverse elements which do not observe their just relative proportions, and thus, because every part would have the mastery, distemper is generated as a side-product. And if a soul is infected, it too embraces diverse kinds of life which are in some manner opposites; by their conflict, because each follows its own end, one imposes evil on another. It was necessary that Body should be thus compounded of jarring parts (else there had been no perishable existence, and the universe had been the poorer, lacking its full completeness); and likewise that our souls should here be composite, if this world was to support rational creatures. For rational lives could not be incarnated without mediation: they could not directly exercise appetite, perception, imagination, and the other irrational functions, both active and passive, without which mortal existence could not be sustained for the briefest space.

Evils, then, are generated as a side-product from the pur-

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he calls Matter "a child of God" (*de Mal. Subst.*, p. 236).

<sup>2</sup> There are suggestions of this solution in the *Timæus*: *c. g.* 68 E.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Rsp.* 379 C.

positive activities of Beings, and because of no other Principle than the Good. Where they are generated, the Whole disposes them to serve its need, and by this power of the disposers the evils themselves are transmuted into good. There is thus no unmixed Evil, no evil thing that does not participate some vestige of Good. And in this sense we may hold that Evil is from God, as being in some measure a good: moreover, evil to the divided existences it is but incidental, arising from other partial causes which have lapsed yet further into division. . . .

#### LI. IN WHAT SENSE WE ARE FREE AGENTS

*Plotinus Enn., III. i. 1, 10*

1. . . . Among eternal existences, those which are primary cannot be ascribed to causes other than themselves, else they would not be primary; and the dependent must derive their Being from the primary. . . . But there are existences which either have a beginning in time, or, if they subsist eternally, nevertheless do not eternally exercise the same activity;<sup>1</sup> and in this region we must suppose that all things have their causes. The notion of uncaused happenings is not to be admitted: there can be room neither for meaningless "deviations"<sup>2</sup> nor for sudden movements spontaneously generated in bodies; nor yet for capricious impulses arising in the soul without some incentive to provoke her to an action never before performed. Were such impulses indeed possible, the soul would thereby be all the more in subjection to necessity: for she would not be mistress of herself, but the plaything of movements originated by no will or cause. A soul is moved either by an object of true will (which may be an external thing or contained within herself), or by an object of instinctive desire; unless there were some object of appetite, there could be no movement. . . .

<sup>1</sup> As, for instance, the human soul.

<sup>2</sup> The Epicurean term for the supposed "swerve" of the atoms, which would throw them out of a uniform line of descent. *De Nat. II. 216 ff.*

10. From our discussion we conclude, that whilst all things are predictable and have their causes there are two species of causes, some matters being determined by the soul, some by other agencies, which environ us: and in regard to the actions of our souls, that in so far as these accord with right reason, they are our own;<sup>1</sup> but in the rest of her conduct, which is indeed less conduct than passive experience, the soul is hindered from performing her proper task. Thus the causes of unwisdom are not in ourselves; and it may be that they are right who ascribe this kind of conduct to Destiny, if by Destiny they intend a principle of causation affecting us from without. Our best acts, however, are our own; for when we dwell apart<sup>2</sup> we are ourselves of the same nature with the Best. The zealous are true agents, and noble action is within their power. The rest are in that measure agents in which they are allowed some breathing space for noble doing; their wisdom, when they have it, is not got from without—it needs but the removal of a hindrance.

## LII. OF CIVIC VIRTUE

*Plotinus Enn., i. ii. 1*

Evils have their existence in the world of sense, "haunting this region by necessity";<sup>3</sup> the soul's desire is to escape from evils; therefore we must escape the world of sense. Wherein consists that escape? "In assimilation to God: that is, in becoming just, holy and wise,"<sup>4</sup> in a word, virtuous. . . .

Does the Divine possess virtues? Reason assuredly forbids that we ascribe to it those virtues which are termed civic, a Sagacity proper to the rational part in us, a Fortitude which

<sup>1</sup> Any immaterial Reality is potentially entire in each of its parts: in so far as we actively identify ourselves with such a Reality, we cease to be links in a chain of necessity, and become true agents, for freedom and reality are interchangeable terms. Plotinus' view has close analogies with Kant's doctrine of the autonomy of the practical reason as contrasted with the mechanism of the phenomenal world.

<sup>2</sup> That is, when influences from the composite "animal nature" are excluded.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Theæt.* 176 A.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

belongs to the choleric part, a Serenity that lies in a certain concert or unison of desire with reason, a Justice that is the fulfilment by each of these three natures of its proper task in respect of sovereignty and subjection.<sup>1</sup>

Shall we say, then, that likeness to God comes not from the civic virtues, but from those higher excellences which go by the same name? and if it be from the higher, are the civic then altogether void of effect? To hold that assimilation is effected only through the higher and not in some measure through the lower also, is surely against reason; for certainly there have been men of civic virtue, by tradition styled divine, of whom we must confess that in some manner they attained to likeness. No: virtue may be reached by either road, though there be a difference in the quality.<sup>2</sup> . . .

#### LIII. OF VIRTUE AS PURIFICATION<sup>3</sup>

*Plotinus Enn.*, I. ii. 3, 5

3. . . . When we call the virtues "cleansings," what is intended? and how, precisely, is cleansing a means to likeness? We answer, that the soul is then evil when she is interpenetrated with the body, when all her feelings and all her judgments are infected by it. Correspondingly, she is then good, and achieves her excellence, when her judgment throws off the body and operates in its purity (which is intellection or Sagacity); when her feeling is liberated (which is Serenity); when she fears not her withdrawal from the body (which is Fortitude); when reason and intelligence are sovereign, the other faculties acquiescing (which is Justice). Now this condition of the soul, wherein she attains intellection, and is, as we have described, impassible, may properly be

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 427-435.

<sup>2</sup> For the Platonic distinction between civic or popular and philosophic virtue, cf. *Rep.* 500 D-501 A, and other passages collected by Archer-Hind on the *Phaedo*, Appendix I. The Neoplatonists were doubtless influenced to some extent by the Stoic idealisation of the "sage"; but they were saved from the worst extravagances of Stoicism by their firm grasp of the principle of continuity.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 64-9.

called an assimilation to God; for the Divine, also, is pure, and its activity such that the imitation of it is Sagacity.

Is not the Supreme, then, in a like condition with the purified soul? No: for the Supreme has no states: states are proper only to souls. Soul's intellection, moreover, is other than the Divine Intellection. She knows the heavenly things after her own fashion; and some of them she knows not at all. . . . Thus virtue belongs to the Soul, but not to the Intelligence, nor to That which is beyond.

5. . . . In fine, the soul herself will be altogether cleansed from unworthy desires; and she will endeavour to make the irrational part clean also, that it shall not be assailed by lusts, or at least not with violence, so that its passions will be rare, and straightway dissipated by the soul's presence: as one that had a Sage for neighbour might profit by his nearness to him, either through growth in likeness, or because he felt shame to venture any act which should displease the holy man. The presence of reason assures that there shall be no conflict: for the lower life will feel shame before the reason, so that, for the least stir it has made, itself will suffer distress, and reproach its own weakness, that it could not observe stillness when its master was there.

‘ LIV. OF THE HIGHER VIRTUE

*Plotinus Enn., i. ii. 6*

Certainly in such a governance of the lower nature there is no sin; it is the righteousness proper to Man. But to be quit of sin is not all his concern: his endeavour is to be a god. Now so long as any part of his conduct is unwilled, Man is a god doubled with a daemon, or rather, with a second god having his own lesser excellence. But with the vanishing of the unwilled, there is only deity—a god among those that walk with the First God. For the self of the Man is that which came from Yonder; and by his own nature, were he but again as at his first coming, he is even now in the Divine. As for that

other,<sup>1</sup> wherewith he began to consort upon his entry here, even that shall he assimilate to himself by the power of the Highest, so that if possible it shall not be smitten with desire for what its master disapproves, or at the least it shall not work its desire.

What are the several virtues of this divine-Man? First, Wisdom and Sagacity, meditating those objects which the Intelligence by immediate contact possesses. Each of these characters is twofold, subsisting under one form in the Intelligence, under another in Soul; and only in the soul-form is it a virtue. What is it, then, as it subsists Yonder? It is the activity and essence of the Intelligence: but in our region, coming from Yonder and subsisting as an attribute, it is a virtue. So also Justice-in-itself, or any virtue regarded in itself, is not properly virtue, but virtue's Original: virtue is the reflection it casts upon the soul. For virtue must inhere in a subject; whereas the absolute degree of any quality is in no subject but in itself.

But does not Justice, defined to be the right relation of tasks, require a plurality of parts? No: where there exist distinct parts, there is found such a relation in plurality; but there is a right relation even within a unity. The true Justice-absolute is a relation of one thing to itself, without distinction of parts. And accordingly even in the soul the higher Justice is the direction of activity towards the Intelligence; as the higher Serenity is an inward conversion towards the same, and the higher Fortitude an impassivity gained through likeness to the object of her contemplation (which is by nature passionless, whilst the soul through virtue makes herself so, that she may not share the feelings of her less worthy housemate).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ἑστίν φ δέ.

<sup>2</sup> Morality thus loses, at the highest level of soul-life, the negative character which distinguishes the "cleansing" stage; it becomes definable in positive terms by its relation to a Principle beyond itself, and at the same time individual forms of moral goodness progressively tend to merge in assimilation to this higher Principle. Later Neoplatonists distinguished as many as five different levels of morality.

## VIII

### BEAUTY

#### LV. OF THE BEAUTY OF ART

*Plotinus Enn., v. viii. 1*

3. LET us consider two objects having extension—two pieces of stone, if you will—of which the one, untouched by art, has had no rhythm wrought into it, whilst the other has been subdued by art into the likeness of a divine being, some Grace or Muse, or it may be of some man or woman—yet this not any individual person, but one whom art has created by an assembling of all loveliness. Set the two side by side, and it will be apparent that the stone fashioned by art into the beauty of a Form is beautiful not because it is stone—for if so the other likewise would be beautiful—but by reason of the Form which art has imposed on it. Now this Form did not belong to the material, but was in him who conceived it even before it entered into the stone. And it was *in* the artificer, not as his own eyes or hands were his, but because he participated the Art. In the Art, then, this beauty must have existed in far greater perfection. For what entered into the stone was not that abiding beauty which is in the Art, but another and a lesser, which took its origin from the Art; and even this second beauty could not remain unspoilt in the stone, nor be in it what it strove to be, save in so far as the material was plastic to the Art. . . .

If any think meanly of the Arts, on this ground, that when they create they do no more than mimic Nature, we have a threefold answer.<sup>1</sup> First, we shall remark that all Nature is

<sup>1</sup> The following passage is a tacit criticism of Plato's teaching in *Rep.* Bk. X. Cf. Schelling's view that the artist must bring into consciousness 'the essential, the universal, the aspect and expression of the indwelling spirit of Nature.'

in its turn an imitation of some other thing. In the second place, we are not to conceive that the Arts imitate merely the thing seen: they go back to the principles of Form out of which Nature is generated. Thirdly, in many of their creations they go beyond imitation: because they possess beauty, they supply from themselves whatever is lacking in the sensible object. It was not in the world of sense that Pheidias found the model for his Zeus; he rendered Zeus as he might appear if he chose to show himself to our bodily sight.<sup>1</sup>

#### LVI. OF NATURAL, AND OF INTERIOR BEAUTY

*Plotinus Enn., v. viii. 2*

Let us turn from the Arts to the world whose achievements they are said to mimic. Let us consider the beauties confessedly produced by Nature, live things reasoning and unreasoning, and particularly such as fulfil their type, because the Artificer who moulded them has mastered his material and given them the Form he intended. What is the beauty that is in them? Clearly it does not consist in such things as the blood and menses, but in a colour distinct from these, and in a shape, whereas these have either an unshapely shape or none.<sup>2</sup> Or is the body's beauty some unity like the embracing Form, to which these things stand in the relation of Matter?<sup>3</sup> Whence flamed that apparition of Helen's beauty for which men fought? whence the beauty of all those women who have been like in loveliness to the Queen of Love? nay, whence had that Queen her beauty, or any of mankind that has been wholly beautiful, or any god, either of those that have come to bodily sight or of those who come not yet carry that which would be seen as beauty? Is not this principle everywhere

<sup>1</sup> The same remark had been made by Cicero (*Orator*, § 9), who perhaps borrowed it from an earlier Platonist; and Philostratus had pointed out that great works of art are produced not by imitation but by imagination.

<sup>2</sup> ἄλλη τούτων, καὶ σχῆμα. <τούτων δὲ σχῆμα>.

<sup>3</sup> <τὰ δὲ> οἷα ὕλη.



*Form*, something which passes out of the creator into the created, as in the Arts we held that it passed from the Art into its product?

What then shall we conclude? That the created things and the reflection upon Matter of the formative principle are beautiful, whilst that principle in the creator, where it is primal and not dispersed, in Matter but gathered into a unity, is not Beauty? Assuredly not. Were the extended beautiful in virtue of being extended, the principle which created it, not being itself extended, could not be beautiful; but if the truth is that a Form, whether we see it in little or in bulk, does equally in either case by its own power move and dispose the soul of the beholder, then beauty is not to be credited to extended magnitude as such. . . .

In truth Nature,<sup>1</sup> the maker of so much beauty, is herself beautiful in a far prior sense; but we, having no knowledge of the inward things, nor habit of looking within, pursue the outward, not guessing that by the inward we are moved: as a man perceiving his own reflection, but not knowing whence it came, might follow after it. That the true goal of our pursuit is something other, and beauty consists not in magnitude, is plain from the beauty which belongs to studies and to observances,<sup>2</sup> in fine, to souls. This indeed is truly the greater beauty, when thou seest understanding in a man and dost adore it, not looking to the bodily countenance—for that might be unsightliness—but passing over all sensible shape and pursuing the inward fairness only. If that sight moves thee not as yet to call such an one beautiful, neither shalt thou, looking within, have pleasure in thine own soul's beauty. It is in vain for thee, being so conditioned, to seek that other vision; for the instrument of thy search is unsightly and

<sup>1</sup> *J. G. the Creative Soul: cf. viii.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plato, *Symp.* 211 C, the all-important text upon which the whole of the mystical æsthetic of Plotinus is a commentary.

impure. Wherefore also argument of such matters is not addressed to all; but if thou be of those who have seen themselves beautiful, then call to mind that seeing.

#### LVII. OF FALSE ASCETICS

*Plotinus Enn., II. ix. 16, 18*

16. No man may become good by contemning the world and the gods in the world and every thing that is fair. On the contrary, every evil-doer must already have the gods in contempt, and by such contempt men are made evil who were not so before; and the wickedness of the half-evil is by this addition made complete. Toward the incorporeal gods they<sup>1</sup> indeed profess reverence; but in their reverence is small force of sympathy. For one who entertains a true affection toward any object welcomes all that is akin to the beloved, carrying his love over from the father to the children. Now every soul is a child of the Divine. . . . And he has but verbal knowledge of the heavenly Beings who misprizes their Kindred. . . .

There is no musician, who has beheld the concord of the intelligible universe, but shall be stirred when he hears the concord of sensible sounds. There is no master of geometry and numbers but he shall take delight in viewing with the eyes of the body that which is symmetrical, justly proportioned, and strictly ordered. And so it is even with pictures: not all who perceive with the eyes the sensible products of art are affected alike by the same object, but if they know it for the outward portrayal of an archetype subsisting in intuition, their hearts are shaken and they recapture memory of that Original. Out of this experience is the awakening also of love. When we see beauty excellently mirrored in a human face, we

<sup>1</sup> The Gnostics, who are attacked throughout this section. Passages such as this decisively vindicate Plotinus from the imputation of morbid puritanism and hatred of life which is still often cast indiscriminately upon all the philosophical thought of later antiquity.

are carried toward the heavenly Beauty: is there any man, then, so inactive of wit and so unstirring, that when he sees the multitudinous loveliness of this world, the universal symmetry and the vast cosmic order, and the remote revelation of the stars, it shall not set him thinking, overtaken with awe, "If this be the image, what must be the Original?"<sup>1</sup> Such an one has not understood the earthly beauty, neither perceived the heavenly.

18. But they will urge, it may be, that their teachings lead men to hold themselves aloof in abhorrence from the body, whilst ours fetter the soul to it. We will answer them by a figure. In the one fair house are two lodgers. Of these the one quarrels with the furnishing and rails against the builder, yet does not cease to lodge there. The other makes no complaint, but confesses that the builder has wrought very skilfully, and so awaits the hour of departure, when he shall no more need a house. The first, because he has been taught to repeat that the walls are but of soulless stones and timber and the whole but a sorry counterfeit of the true dwelling, fancies himself more instructed than his fellow and readier for the road, not guessing that all his supposed advantage is in this, that he will not bear what bear he must—unless indeed his discontent be feigned,<sup>2</sup> whilst privately he is enamoured of the beauty of these same "stones." So long as we have bodies it is proper we should lodge in those houses which our good sister the Soul has builded for us by her mighty power of labourless creation. . . .

By the pretence, that they alone have the faculty of meditation, such faculty as they have is nowise increased; nor yet by their assertion, that they in death shall be liberated, but those deathless souls<sup>3</sup> never, which to all time rule the firmament.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Fragments*. 13b, 14.

<sup>2</sup> προσποιεῖται δυσχεραίνειν.

<sup>3</sup> The souls of the stars, which are loftier than the souls embodied in us. For Plotinus there is no "inanimate" nature: all Nature is alive, and all her life is in various degrees a meditation (viii).

They make this boast because they know not what liberation is, nor in what manner the universal Soul cares for the soulless everywhere.<sup>1</sup> It is possible for us to escape carnality; to purify ourselves of dross; to condemn death; to know the better and pursue it; and all this without the jealous denial that other existences also have power to pursue Good and dwell in its pursuit for ever. . . .

LVIII. HOW BEAUTY IS RELATED TO REALITY AND GOODNESS  
*Plotinus Enn., I. vi. 6*

. . . It has been truly said, that to make one's soul good and beautiful is to make oneself like to God: because from Yonder is the Beautiful and one component of the Real World—or, more strictly, all the Real World is Beauty, and what is ugly is the Other Nature.<sup>2</sup> Ugliness is the same as original Evil: and thus its contrary is at once good and beautiful, or the Good and Beauty. Accordingly the beautiful and the good must be studied together, the ugly and the evil together. We must posit that the First, which is also the Good, is Beauty-absolute.<sup>3</sup> From this without intermediary arises Intelligence, the Beautiful; and Soul is beautiful through Intelligence. From the Soul's shaping all other beauty is derived, whether of actions or of observances: nay, even those bodies which we call beautiful are made so by Soul. For being herself a divine thing and as it were a fragment of the Beautiful, she confers beauty on all that she touches and masters, in the measure of its capacity.

LIX. OF THE PERFECT BEAUTY

*Plotinus Enn., I. vi. 7.*

We must mount therefore again to the Good, which every

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedr.* 246 B.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* Matter.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phil.* 64 E: Elsewhere Plotinus makes the Good "prior" to the Beautiful (*Enn.* V. v. 12): but as the One is termed "the Good" although it transcends moral virtue, so it may be called "Beauty," although it transcends the Beautiful.

soul craves. Whosoever has seen it, that man understands me when I say that the Good is beautiful. The very tension of the will towards it is itself to be willed as a good ; but the attainment is to those who go the upward way, who have converted their vision and put off the garment with which in our descending we have covered ourselves. Even so for those who go up to the sanctuaries of the temples there are purgations and a putting-off of the former garments and a naked up-going. But when in his long climbing a man shall have passed by all that is not of God's nature, then with his sole self he shall see God's sole self free of alloy or admixture or taint ; he shall see That whence all things hang, whither all things look, whereby all things are and live and think, -inasmuch as That is the cause of Life and Thought and Being. If any man should come to sight of That, what starts of love should he feel ! what passions of desire, to be merged therein ! and how should he be amazed with gladness ! Even he that has never yet beheld it may reach out towards it, believing it to be good ; but to adore its beauty, to be filled with a joyful awe, to be beside oneself yet without hurt to the self, to know the love which is very love, and the keenness of longing, until all other loves are things to smile at, until all is contemned that before one accounted fair—this is his possession who has beheld. He is like in case to those who have met the shapes of gods or daemons and for that cause can never take delight as formerly in the beauty of other bodies. If so it is with these, how might it be with one who should look on Beauty's self in essence and integrity, not infected with flesh or any taint of body, the Beauty which for its perfect integrity has no dwelling on the earth nor in the heavens ? For all these things are but a foreign alloy, and their beauty not original, but drawn from that Beauty. If his vision were of That, which dispenses to all, yet in its giving holds itself withdrawn, and admits not anything from without, then while he remained

in its contemplation and found his pleasure in it, growing like to it, what fair thing should he crave beyond? This is the very self of Beauty, self of the First: it makes its lovers beautiful so that they too are worthy of love. It is for this that souls must run their ultimate and greatest race:<sup>1</sup> the prize of all their striving is this, that they be not without portion in the supreme spectacle. Blessed is he whose eyes have seen the blessed vision: but he that fails in this has verily failed. For a man may fail to win fair bodies, may fail to win power or office or a king's throne, and yet it is not failure; failure it is, although he should gain all else, if a man fail of This—for whose winning he ought to reject thrones and principalities of all the earth and sea and sky, if by leaving these behind him and looking beyond them his vision might be converted Thither and he should see.

LX. HOW WE MAY APPROACH THE PERFECT BEAUTY

*Plotinus Enn.*, I. vi. 8, 9

8. What then is the way of the vision? what the access to it? How shall a man behold a Beauty beyond access, abiding as it were behind walls in its inviolate sanctuaries, never going forth to the outer temple that it should be seen even of the profane? Let man go to the vision. Let him pursue into the innermost, if power be his, leaving without all sight that is of the eyes, neither turning back after the glories of body that he knew before. Having seen the fairness which is in bodies, let him not follow after them, but rather recognise that they are images and vestiges and shadows, and so flee to That whose images they are. For when a man flings himself upon these and would clutch them, esteeming them substantial, they prove but as that fair similitude playing over water, which, as a riddling fable tells, one sought to snatch and thereby sank beneath the flood and was no more seen. Even thus the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 247 B; *Rep.* 608 B ff.

man who holds fast to bodies' loveliness and will not let it go shall sink down, not in body but in soul, to certain pits of the dark where thought has no joy; there blind he shall abide in the house of the Invisible,<sup>1</sup> and his fellowship shall be with shadows, there as here.

Truly the word of counsel, "Let us flee to our own fatherland,"<sup>2</sup> might be uttered with a deeper meaning. But what then shall the flight be? how shall we put out upon the sea? It shall be like the flight from the enchantress Circe or from Calypso, of which Odysseus told, speaking, as I think, in symbols, how that he was not content to stay, notwithstanding all the joy he had by his eyes and that exceeding great beauty of sense which was his companion. The Fatherland to us is that place from whence we came; and in that place is the Father.

But once again, what shall be the furnishing of our voyage? and what shall be the flight? Not afoot shalt thou win the way Thither: our feet can but carry us from one country of earth to another: neither hast thou need of chariot and horses, nor to procure any instrument of sea-faring. All these things shalt thou put from thee and regard them not. Shutting fast, as it were, the eyes of sense, thou must get new eyes and waken in thyself that power of vision which all men have, notwithstanding few use it.

9. What is it, that this interior vision sees? Remark first, that when it is but lately awaked it can by no means endure to look upon bright things.<sup>3</sup> Therefore thy soul must herself be practised, in looking at first upon fair observances; thereafter on fair works (not such as the arts work, but the works of those men who are called good); and next on the souls of the workers of fair works.

<sup>1</sup> Hades: Plotinus seems to play on the supposed derivation. For this conception of Purgatory, cf. xliv.

<sup>2</sup> *Iliad*, II. 140.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 515 E ff.

But how mayest thou see what manner of beauty good souls have? Withdraw into thyself, and see thyself. And if as yet thou see no beauty in thyself, then do as does the maker of an image which shall at last be fair: as he strikes off a part and a part planes away, as he makes this smooth and releases that, until he has revealed upon the image its face of beauty; so do thou strip away all excess and make straight all crookedness; whatsoever is yet prisoned in darkness, labour to release it that it may be bright; and cease not from the fashioning of thine own image, until that day when the glory of virtue as of a god shall flame upon thee, and thine eyes shall behold Serenity established on her stainless pedestal.<sup>1</sup> If thou hast become that perfect image, and hast looked upon it and communed with thyself in freedom from all taint, carrying nothing that can hinder thee to be thus unified, bearing within thee no foreign thing mixed with the self, when all thy being is transfigured to very light and light alone, a light that is measured by no magnitude and circumscribed by no shape for its diminishing, nor yet enlarged in magnitude by any infinity of space, but is in every place unmeasured, seeing that it is greater than all measure and more than all quantity:<sup>2</sup> if thou hast become that light and looked upon thy true self, from thence forward be of good courage as touching thyself—is not all thy soul gathered into vision? From thence forward go thou up. Thou hast no longer need of any guide. Only set thy view hard: and see.

For to this eye and none but this the Great Beauty is made visible. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 214 B.

<sup>2</sup> Heaven is a qualitative, not a quantitative, infinity.



## IX

### SOME RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF NÉOPLATONISM

#### LXI. CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF MAGIC AND PRAYER

*Plotinus Enn., iv. iv. 40, 41*

40. How are enchantments produced? By community of feeling, through the natural concord of like principles and contrariety of unlike, and through the variety of the many powers which go to make up the one world-animal. Many things suffer attraction and enchantment without intent or contrivance on another's part. The true magic is the Love<sup>1</sup> contained within the universe, and the Hate likewise. This is the original enchanter and master of potions: but when men come to know him, they employ against one another his potions and his wizardries. . . .

41. In like manner prayer attains its effect by a community of feeling betwixt certain parts of the universe, which lie as it were along the same stretched cord, so that if the cord be twitched at its lower extremity the tremor is felt above. Often, moreover, one cord has a kind of perception that another has been plucked, because the two are in accord and tuned to the same pitch. And if the sympathy extends so far that the vibration sent out from one lyre is received by another, then in all the universe there is but one general harmony, though it be formed of contraries: in all things, and even in contraries, there will be likeness and kinship.<sup>2</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> So Proclus (*in Tim.* ii. 85) says that "the universe is by love united with its priors, beholding through its own beauty the beauty which is in them."

<sup>2</sup> Contrariety is contingent upon the presence of Matter: it is the principle of Appearance, as Likeness is the principle of Reality. Cf. xlvii.

## LXII. AGAINST THEURGY

*Plotinus Enn., II. ix. 14*

In another manner also these persons<sup>1</sup> themselves infringe the purity of the Heaven-world. When they write incantations and pretend to direct them to the divine Hierarchy, not only to the Soul but to the Principles beyond Soul, do not they declare the Divine subject to sorceries and enchantments and binding spells, obedient to command, impotent to resist the mortal who has a little skill in uttering thus or thus this or that hymn or cry, in producing certain breathings or hissings or other prescriptions to bewitch Heaven?<sup>2</sup> And though this be not their meaning, I know not how they hope to affect incorporeal Principles by uttered sounds.<sup>3</sup> In the ambition to make their own pretensions appear more grand, unwittingly they have stripped Heaven of its grandeur.

They pretend likewise to expel ailments from their bodies. Now, if they professed to do this by temperance and an ordered regimen, their profession would be just and consonant with the teaching of the philosophers. But no: laying down that ailments are the work of demons, they boastfully claim that they can remove them by spells. By this they may appear the grander to the common sort of men, who are awed by the curious arts of magicians; nevertheless they cannot persuade rational persons that sicknesses have not their causes in fatigue or surfeit or insufficient nourishment or mortification of tissue, in fine, in some specific change originated from without or from within. . . .

<sup>1</sup> The Gnostics.

<sup>2</sup> ὅσα <τὰ> ἐκεῖ.

<sup>3</sup> True prayer for the Neoplatonist is an inward tension of the will, not an outward ritual. Cf. lxi, lxx; and *Enn.* V. i. 6, where Plotinus says that before we make any pronouncement on the mystery of creation we are to "ask help of God himself, not in public speech, but in prayer within the soul extending ourselves towards him; for praying thus we can be alone with God."

## LXIII. THE SAME: PORPHYRY

*Porphyry, ad Aneb., 46*

. . . I beg of you<sup>1</sup> that you will show me the road to happiness, and in what consists its essence. Amongst us, who by merely human reasonings make guess at the Good, there is much bandying of arguments. And as for those<sup>2</sup> who have found means to intercourse with a higher Principle, wherever this faculty is submitted to test, their science has been practised to no significant purpose: they have disturbed the divine Intelligence for the matter of discovering a runaway slave, or purchasing an estate, or, it may be, in reference to a marriage or to the conduct of trade. Where, on the other part, their knowledge is not capable of being tested, as upon this question of happiness, the initiates can give us no demonstrative assurance, however truly they speak on other matters. Their art being thus as useless as it is difficult, we must conclude that its inspirers are not gods or good daemons: either it is that "Wandering of the spirit"<sup>3</sup> of which we have heard, or it is all a fiction of mortal origin, the invention of men. . . .

## LXIV. POSITION OF THE THEURGISTS

*Anon. de myster., II. II*

It is not thought that links the theurgist<sup>1</sup> to the gods; else what should hinder the theoretical philosopher to enjoy theurgic union with them? The case is not so. Theurgic union is attained only by the due ritual fulfilment of the unspeakable acts which are beyond all intellection, and by the power of the unutterable symbols which are intelligible only to the gods. Wherefore we exercise no active influence by thinking these symbols: for if we did, their influence would be both in-

<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian priesthood, to which Anebo belonged.

<sup>2</sup> *I. e.* the theurgists.

<sup>3</sup> The reference is to a belief in evil demons which purposely lead the mind astray: cf. *ad Aneb.* 26; *de Abst.* II. 40.

ellective and derived from us, whereas in truth it is neither. Without intellection on our part the tokens by their own virtue perform their proper work. By its own virtue, and not because it is aroused through our intellection, the unspeakable power of the gods, to whom these tokens are attached, knows the images which are akin to it; for it is contrary to nature, that the embracing Form should be set in motion by that which it embraces, the perfect by the imperfect, or the whole by the part. Accordingly our thinking is not the principal agent in awakening the activity of the divine Causes. This thinking ought indeed to be an antecedent condition, together with an excellence in the general disposition of the soul and a personal purity. These are contributory causes: but the influence which actively arouses the divine will lies in the divine tokens themselves. Thus the powers of the gods do not admit any stimulation of their peculiar energy by inferior existences, but are themselves the source of their own activity.

## LXV. OF PIETY

*Porphyry ad Marc., 12, 16-18*

12. Of all thy doings, and of thine every deed and word, let God be the present witness and examiner. Whatsoever good thing we do, we must esteem God to be its author; but of evil things "The guilt lies with ourselves who made the choice, and God is guiltless."<sup>1</sup> Wherefore we must pray God for such things only as are worthy of him; and ask those gifts which we can receive from none but him. What comes not without toil and virtue, we must pray to attain it after toil: the prayer of the indolent is but vain speech. "That which, when gotten, thou shalt not keep, ask not of God: for all that is of God's gift is inalienable, and what thou mayest not keep he will not give."<sup>2</sup> What thou shalt no more need when thou art quit of the body, that condemn: what shall be needful

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 617 E.

<sup>2</sup> A Pythagorean proverb.

to thee hereafter, toward that direct thy discipline, and bid God be thy helper. Those things, then, which Fortune gives, and oftentimes again retracts, thou wilt not ask for. Neither wilt thou make petition for any thing before the fit season, but only when God makes plain to thee the right desire implanted 'n thee by nature.

16. . . . God prizes not the words of the wise man, but his deeds. The wise adore God even when their lips are silent : the fool, though he make prayers and sacrifices, does but pollute the Divine. There is no true priest but the wise man : none other is loved by God, none other has the secret of prayer.

17. He that follows the discipline of wisdom, follows the knowledge of God : he is not for ever at litany and sacrifice, but practises in works his piety toward God. Not for his reputation among men, nor yet for the empty formulæ of hypocritical professors, does God accept a man : Man by his proper doing wins God's acceptance, and through assimilation of his own nature to the Blessedness which is beyond corruption he makes himself divine. By his proper doing also he makes himself impious and no longer acceptable to God ; and so suffers, not at God's hand (for the Divine works only good), but at his own—as, for instance, through his own false opinion concerning God. It is a less impiety to neglect the images of the gods than to fasten upon God the ungrounded opinions of the vulgar. I would have thee entertain no supposition concerning God that is unworthy of his blessed and incorruptible state.

18. For it is the chiefest fruit of piety to honour God according to the custom of the country, yet not dreaming that his perfection needs anything from thee, but only because by his most awful and blessed sanctity he challenges thy worship. We are not harmed by tending God's altars, nor benefited by neglecting them. But he that pays honour to God as to one having need of such service, has fallen unawares into the thought that he is higher than God. . . .

## LXVI. OF THE MEDITATION OF GOD

*Plotinus Enn., vi. ix. 7*

. . . When thou dost meditate, cast not outwards thy thought. For the Supreme has not its abode in some one place, leaving all others destitute. Whatever man has power to touch it, to him it is present; where no power is, no presence can be. And as in general it is not possible to think upon an object whilst the attention is engaged with another thought: as the object ceases to be itself, unless it be kept free of all association: so here we must understand, that so long as a man has in his soul the imprint of any alien thing, the activity of this imprint will hinder him from thinking on the Supreme; for a soul obsessed and mastered by any thought cannot take the impress of its opposite. We hold in regard to Matter that, if it is to admit all impressions, it must be void of all quality: even so and much more must the soul be emptied of every Form, that no preoccupation hinder her to be filled and illuminated by the Original Principle.

From this it follows, that she must forsake all that is extraneous; her thought must be converted wholly upon itself. The man must not incline toward any of the things outside him, but as he is already aloof from them in feeling so now he must withhold himself from knowledge even of their Forms, nay, from the very knowledge of himself, before he shall come to vision.

But when he has been with the Supreme, and has held sufficient "converse" with it, then must he return and carry back to his fellows such report as he may of that celestial companionship. Thus perchance Minos, whom rumour named the crony of Zeus,<sup>1</sup> had from God's touch the inspiration to lawgiving, and out of his memory of such communion created Law, its shadow. Yet it may be that such an one will choose

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey* xix. 178-9.

to remain in the region above deeds, esteeming even statecraft too mean a business: for one deeply acquainted with vision, this might readily result

God, then, as said our Master, is not strange to any creature, but dwells with all men unawares. By their own will they make themselves strangers to him, or rather, to themselves.<sup>1</sup> Because they have fled from him, they are not able to find him; because they have lost their proper selves, they cannot seek another than themselves. If a child in delirium be estranged from himself, he will not know his father; but one that has learned to know himself, knows also his parentage.

LXVII. OF THE SOUL'S NEARNESS TO GOD, AND OF HER LOVE TOWARDS HIM

*Plotinus Enn. vi, ix. 8, 9*

8. . . . Bodies are withheld from communication in other bodies; but Body cannot suffer incorporeal existences. Such existences are severed one from another not by space but by difference of quality; where no difference is, each, in ceasing to be distinguished from the others, is immediately present to them.

Now the Supreme, because within it are no differences, is eternally present; but we achieve such presence only when our differences are lost. The Supreme has no desire towards us, that it should centre about us; but towards it we have desire, so that we centre about the Supreme. We have at all times our centre There, though we do not at all times look Thither. We are like a company of singing dancers, who may turn their gaze outward and away, notwithstanding they have the choirmaster for centre; but when they are turned towards him, then they sing true and are truly centred upon him. Even so we encircle the Supreme always, and when we break

<sup>1</sup> The knowledge of God and the knowledge of self are the same, God being at the centre of all consciousness: cf. xxxiv and xxxviii. o

the circle, it shall be our utter dissolution and cessation of being; but our eyes are not at all times fixed upon the Centre. Yet in the vision thereof is our attainment and our repose and the end of all discord, God in his dancers and God the true Centre of the dance.

9. . . . We are not cut off from the eternal things: even though the bodily nature intrudes and drags us towards itself, our life is not severed from theirs. In the Divine we breathe, by it we are sustained; it does not give, and thereafter withdraw itself, but is eternally in bestowal, so long, as it shall be that which it is. Nevertheless by inclining ourselves Thither we gain stronger Being; and being There, is Well-Being. In remoteness from the Divine we cannot be well; we can but be, and that with lessened force. . . .

That the Good is Yonder, appears by the love which is the soul's natural companion (so that both in pictures and in fables Eros and the Psyche make a pair). Because she is of God's race, yet other than God, she cannot but love God. Whilst she is Yonder she knows the Heaven-passion; for Yonder dwells Aphrodite-of-the-Heavens, who on earth is made a harlot and changed to Aphrodite-light-o'-love; and every soul is Aphrodite. This is figured in the tale of Aphrodite's birthday and the Eros who was born with her.<sup>1</sup> So long, therefore, as the soul keeps her natural state she is hungry for union with God, entertaining towards him the noble love of a virgin for a father who is noble. But when she enters into generation and is deceived with the gallantries of suitors, then she likes better another and a less enduring love; she leaves her father and submits herself to wantonness. Yet learning afterwards to hate the wanton dealings of this place, she journeys again to her father's house, when she has purified herself of earthly contacts, and there abides in well-being.

Those to whom the Heaven-passion is unknown, may make

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Symp.*, 203 B.



guess at it by the passions of earth. Knowing what it is to win what most one loves, let them reflect that here our love is towards the perishable and hurtful, a wooing of shadows that pass and change, because the rightful object of our love was never here, nor was our good in these things, nor the heart's desire; our true Beloved is elsewhere, who is ours to enjoy by no poor carnal embracings from without, but by participation of his nature and true possession. . . .

( ) LXVIII. OF UNION WITH GOD

*Plotinus Enn.*, VI. ix. 9-11

9. . . . Those who have seen will know of what I speak when I affirm that both in her approach to the Divine, and again when she is come near and has fruition of it, the soul lives with another life; so that by her own condition she is assured that the Dispenser of true life is present to her.<sup>1</sup> Beside this consciousness Man has need of nothing else: all his need is to put from him the other things, to be founded upon That alone, and by stripping away every husk that invests him, to be merged in that sole identity. Thus we grow urgent to be released from this place and impatient of the shackles which bind our lower nature, that with our whole Being we may embrace God and have no longer any member wherewith we lay not fast hold on him.

There shall a man see, as seeing may be in Heaven, both God and himself: himself made radiant, filled with the intelligible light, or rather grown one with that light in its purity, without burden or any heaviness, transfigured to god-head, nay, being in essence God. For that hour he is enkindled; but when once more he is become heavy, it is as though the fire were quenched.

<sup>1</sup> The test here spoken of is described more precisely elsewhere as a sudden consciousness of light (*Enn.* V. iii. 17): cf. Plato, *Epist.* vii., 341 C.

10. How comes it that he does not remain in the Divine? Doubtless because he is not yet altogether emerged from Matter. Yet time shall be, when he shall have unbroken vision, troubled no longer by any importunity of the body. That which is troubled is not the contemplative power, but the rest of our nature; and this happens when the contemplative power ceases from vision, being occupied instead with the knowledge which lies in demonstrations and conjectures, and the dialectic of the soul. Vision and the visionary power is not reason, but a greater thing, reason's prior and crown, even as the object of vision. . . .

That sight is hard to put in words. For how should a man bring back report of the Divine, as of a thing distinct, when in the seeing he knew it not distinct but one with his own consciousness?

11. This was the truth intended in the injunction of our earthly Mysteries, "Publish not to the uninitiate": because the Divine is incommunicable, we must not seek to reveal it to any not blest with the vision. Since Seer and Seen were then not two but one (for the seeing was no seeing, but a merging), the Seer may carry in his heart an image of the Divine, if he can remember That which he became when he was mixed with God. He was then himself One, without inward difference, without difference from the rest of Being: for nothing stirred within him; no choler, no concupiscence of the alien was with him when he had gained the summit; not even reason was left, nor any intellection; in fine, if we must adventure this last paradox, the man's self was vanished. Caught up or God-possessed, poised in the void, he has attained to quiet; in his Being no lightest quiver of deviation, no return of consciousness upon itself; utterly stable, he has become as it were the principle of stability. Even of beauty he is no longer aware, for now he has travelled beyond the Beautiful, the very concert of the virtues is overpassed. He is as one

who presses onward to the inmost sanctuary, leaving behind him the statues in the outer temple; these again upon his emerging shall take his earliest sight after that interior vision and withdrawn communion, which is not of any statue or image, but of Deity itself. These are the lesser spectacles: that Other was scarce to be called a spectacle, but another mode of awareness, an ecstasy, a simplifying or enlarging of the self, an aspiration towards contact, a poise and subtilising of thought to perfect union; this is the seeing reserved to the Sanctuary, which if one seek with the eyes of the body, nothing is there. . . .

That which is Soul can never reach an absolute Unreal. Moving downwards, she will come to Evil, and so to an Unreal, but not to Unreality-absolute. And if she hasten upon the contrary road, she will come not to another but to herself; ceasing thus to exist in an alien world, she exists in none but herself. But to exist in herself alone and not in the universe of Being, is to exist in God. For the self of a man, in respect of its fellowship with God, is not Being but beyond Being. He that sees himself made one with that supreme Self, possesses in himself the counterpart of the Supreme; can he but pass over from himself to God, the image to the Original, he has reached his journey's end. He will lapse again from the vision: but let him again awaken the virtue which is in him, again know himself made perfect in splendour; and he shall again be lightened of his burden, ascending through virtue to the Intelligence, and thence through wisdom to the Supreme. •

This is the life of gods and of the godlike and happy among men; a quittance from things alien and earthly, a life beyond earthly pleasure, a flight of the alone to the Alone.

# INDEX OF PASSAGES TRANSLATED

PLOTINUS ENNEADS.	THIS SELECTION.	PLOTINUS ENNEADS.	THIS SELECTION
I. i. 7	xxxiii	V. v. 1, 2	xvi
I. ii. 1-3, 5, 6	lii-liv	V. viii. 1, 2	lv, lvi
I. vi. 6-9	lviii-lx	4	liii
I. viii. 3, 9	xxviii, xxix	7	lii
7, 15	xlvi	V. ix. 4	xi
13	xliv	VI. vii. 12-15	xv
14	xxxvi	VI. viii. 7, 9, 11,	xxiii
II. iv. 4, 5	xxx	21	
6	xxv	VI. ix. 1	xvii
II. ix. 2, 3	vi	3, 4	xxii
4	ix	7-11	lxvi-lxviii
14	lxii		
16, 18	lvii		
III. i. 1, 10	li	PORPHYRY.	
III. ii. 14, 15	xlx	Sent. 7-9	xlvi
III. iv. 2	xlx	ad Marc. 12,	lxv
II. vi. 7, 13, 14	xxvi, xxvii	16-18	
III. viii. 4	viii	ad Aneb. 46	lxiii
8-10	xviii-xx		
IV. iii. 5	xli	Anon. DE MYST-	lxiv
13	xxxvii	TERIIS, II. 11	
18	xlvi	SALLUSTIUS de	xlvi
24	xlvi	Diis et Mundo	
IV. iv. 40, 41	lxi	20, 21	
IV. vii. 2-4	xxxi		
13 (8)	xxxii	PROCLUS.	
IV. viii. 3	vii	Inst. Theol. 7,	i
6	iv	11, 27	
7	xxxv	13	xxi
IV. ix. 2-5	xl	20	iii
V. i. 1	xxxiv	21, 64, 116,	xxiv
2	v	123, 133	
3	x	31, 33	ii
4	xiv	in Remp. 358	l
10-12	xxxviii	in Tim. 341 D	xxxix

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<sup>1</sup> The present writer hopes shortly to publish an improved text of this work, with translation and commentary.

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